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Fighting the ska wars

FAITH NO MORE
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"It's all about feel and passion."

Plus!
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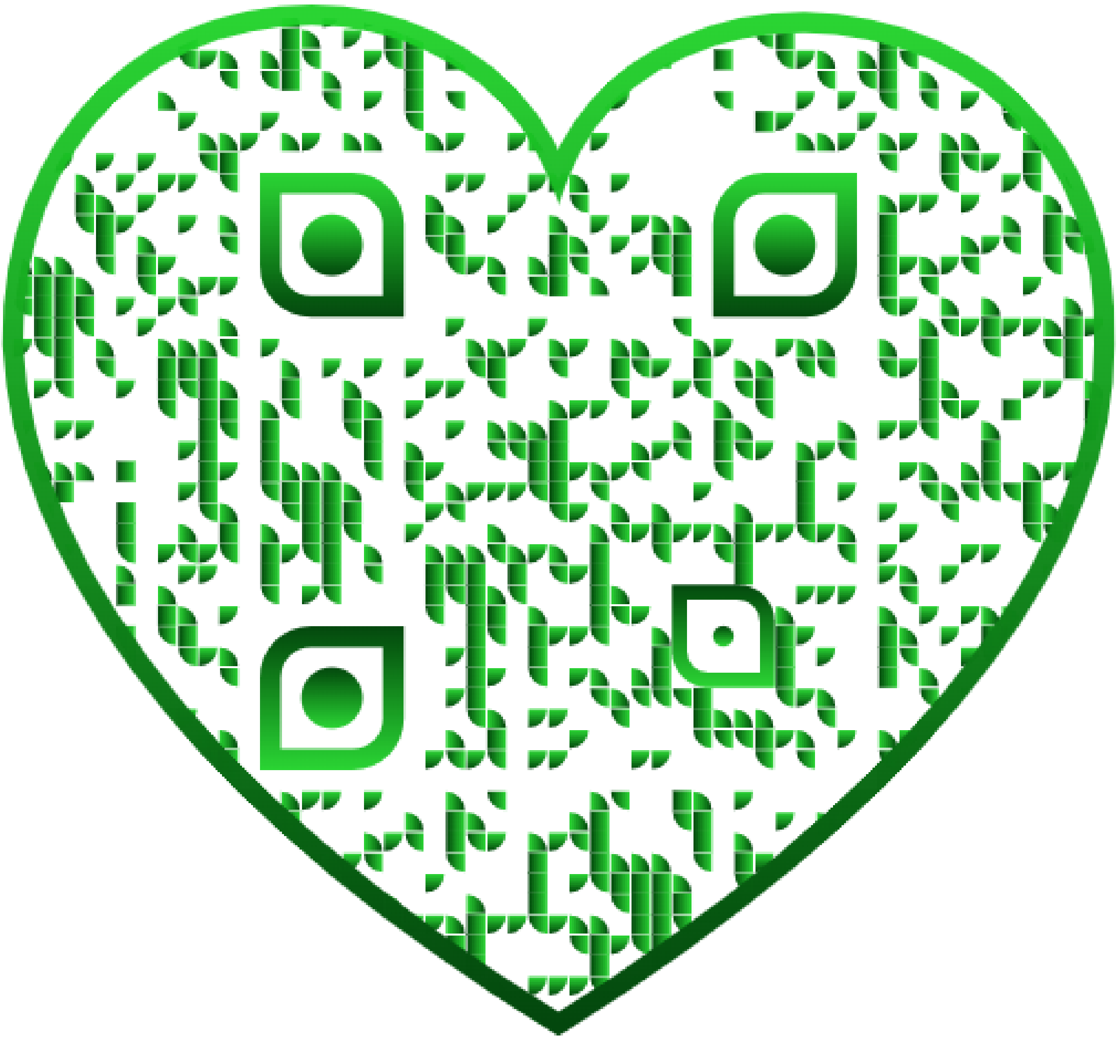
FUTURE



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WELCÖME

Some bass players cannot be stopped. Not even death can defeat them.

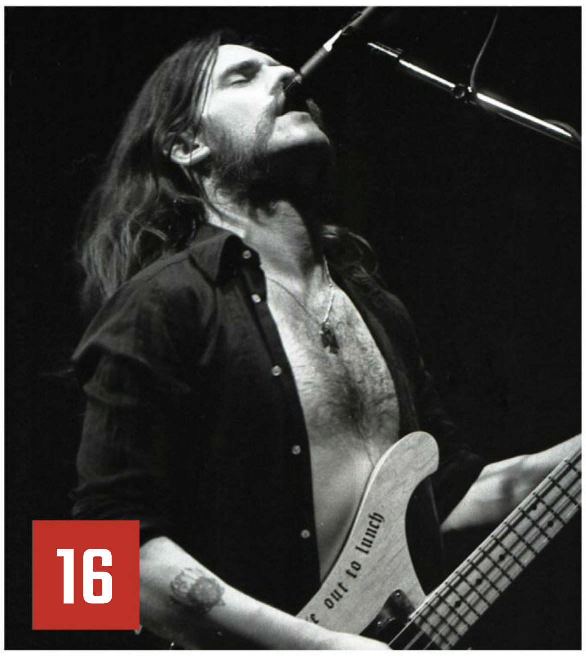
Whatever you may have thought of Motörhead, you couldn't deny the impact of their music, delivered by the genuinely iconic Ian 'Lemmy' Kilmister, who died in 2015 at the age of 70. Of course, a lot of people didn't like his songs, his singing, or his image, come to that: Lemmy wasn't exactly someone you could easily define or ignore.

As a bass player, his tones and playing style were unorthodox to say the least, but they propelled him to a godlike position in our world… even if, as I say, his music wasn't for you. In this issue, we show you to achieve those very bass tones, we look back at Lemmy's chaotic life, and we ask why he remains as popular in the afterlife as he was when he walked among us.

We've enjoyed quality time elsewhere in this issue with Kristin Bidwell, a bassist whose trajectory has encompassed a variety of bass roles; Specials bassist Horace Panter, on the creative form of his career; former Black Flag bassist (and now Emmy award winner) Kira Roessler; Jared Nickerson of the resolutely uncategorizable Burnt Sugar; and Bill Gould of the unclassifiable but funk-heavy Faith No More. That's a ton of bass talent right there, and that's before we even consider our reviews of Godin, Harley Benton, Kustom, Ashdown, and Fender gear, and our unbeatable lessons from a wide range of world-class experts.

So what will 2022 hold for you? Lots of great music, as you'll see in our news section, and opportunities to improve as bass players and, dare I say it, as people. Better times are ahead: Let's enjoy them!

Joel McIver, Editor



Steve Parke

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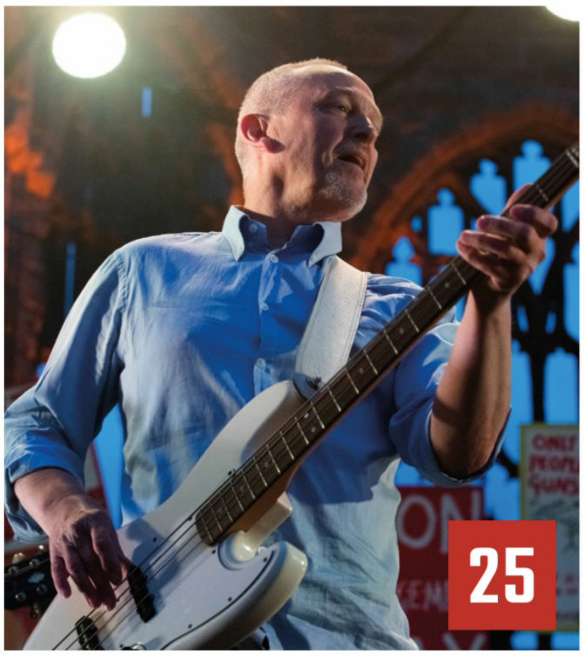
Jack Grisham

Chris McKay/Getty



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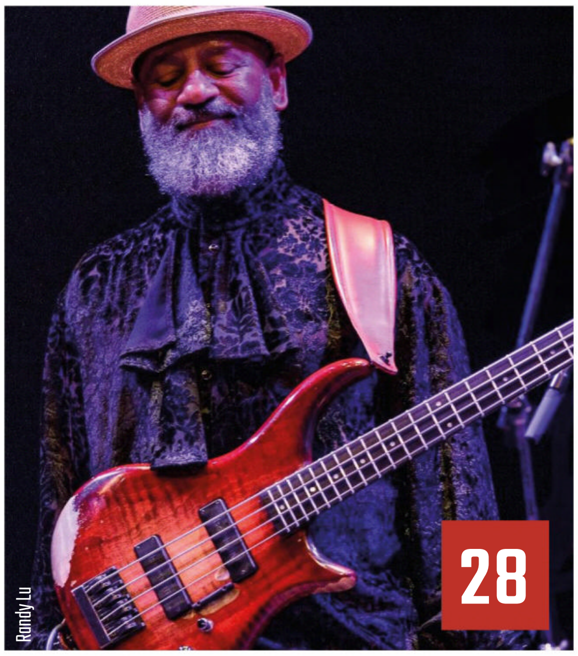

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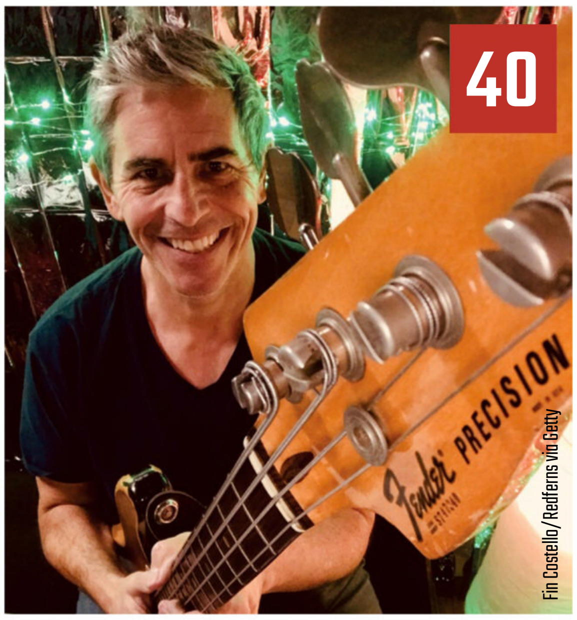

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THE Lowdown

News and views from the bass world, collated by BP's team of newshounds

Prog legend Nick Beggs

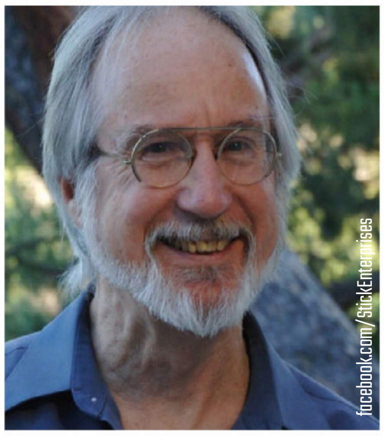
Brian Rasic/Getty

EMMETT CHAPMAN

The Chapman Stick inventor passes away at 85

Emmett Chapman, the inventor of the Chapman Stick, died on November 1. A post on the homepage of the Stick Enterprises site reads: "The musician, inventor of the Free Hands two-handed tapping method and the Chapman Stick, and founder of Stick Enterprises, died at his home on Monday, November 1, after a long battle with cancer."

Chapman invented the 10-string instrument, which he dubbed The Stick, in the late Sixties. A keen jazz guitarist with an eye for innovation, Chapman already played a custom long-scale nine-string guitar, which included a gear shift lever for a "wild string", allowing him to access various different intervals on demand.



facebook.com/StickEnterprises

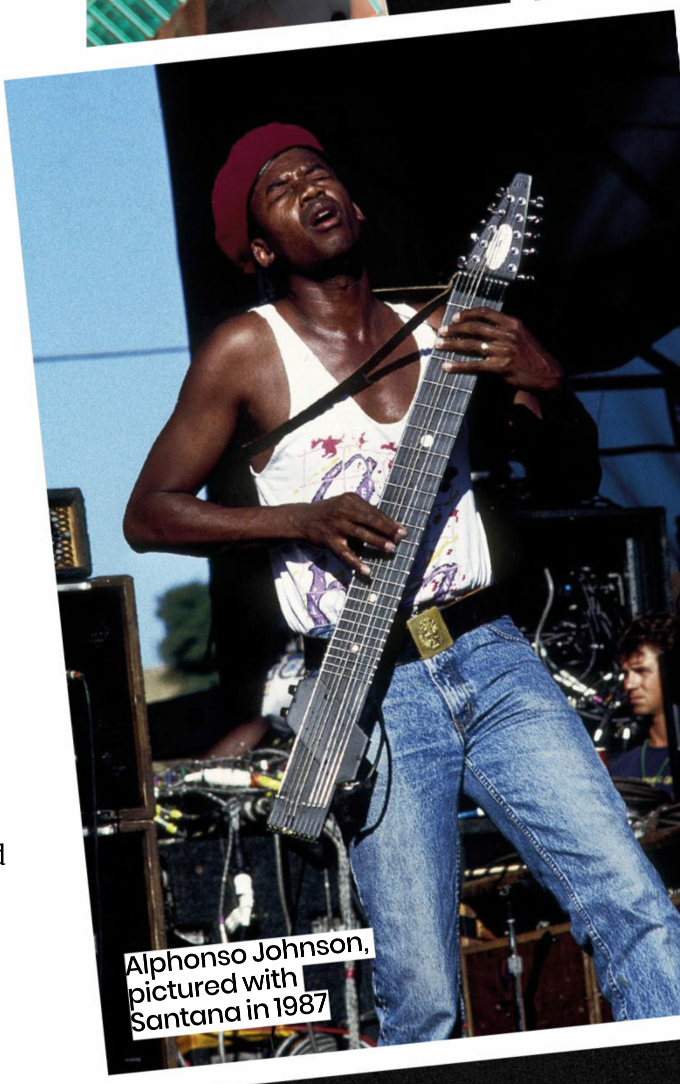
He had begun to practice playing while standing, and one night hit upon the method of playing the instrument in an upright position, using both hands at right angles to the neck in order to play tapped passages. The new position allowed far greater access to (and speed of movement along) the full width and length of the neck. He dubbed the technique "free hands".

Chapman soon began developing a new instrument, before finally unveiling the 10-string Chapman Stick five years later, in 1974. 'The Stick' had the appearance of a large fretboard and was designed to be played upright, via a belt-hook and shoulder strap. It featured five bass strings and five melody strings, with the lowest strings in the middle of the fretboard. It soon caught the attention of some of the era's finest bassists, including ex-Weather Report virtuoso Alphonso Johnson and session star Pino Palladino.

Session legend Tony Levin became particularly associated with the instrument. An early adopter, he was soon using it in performances with Peter Gabriel and later with the likes of Al DiMeola, King Crimson, Pink Floyd and Yes. Nick Beggs, meanwhile, used it in his work with Gary Numan and Belinda Carlisle. The instrument, alongside a passage from Chapman's 1985 song 'Backyard', even appeared in David Lynch's *Dune*, 'played' in the scene by Patrick Stewart.

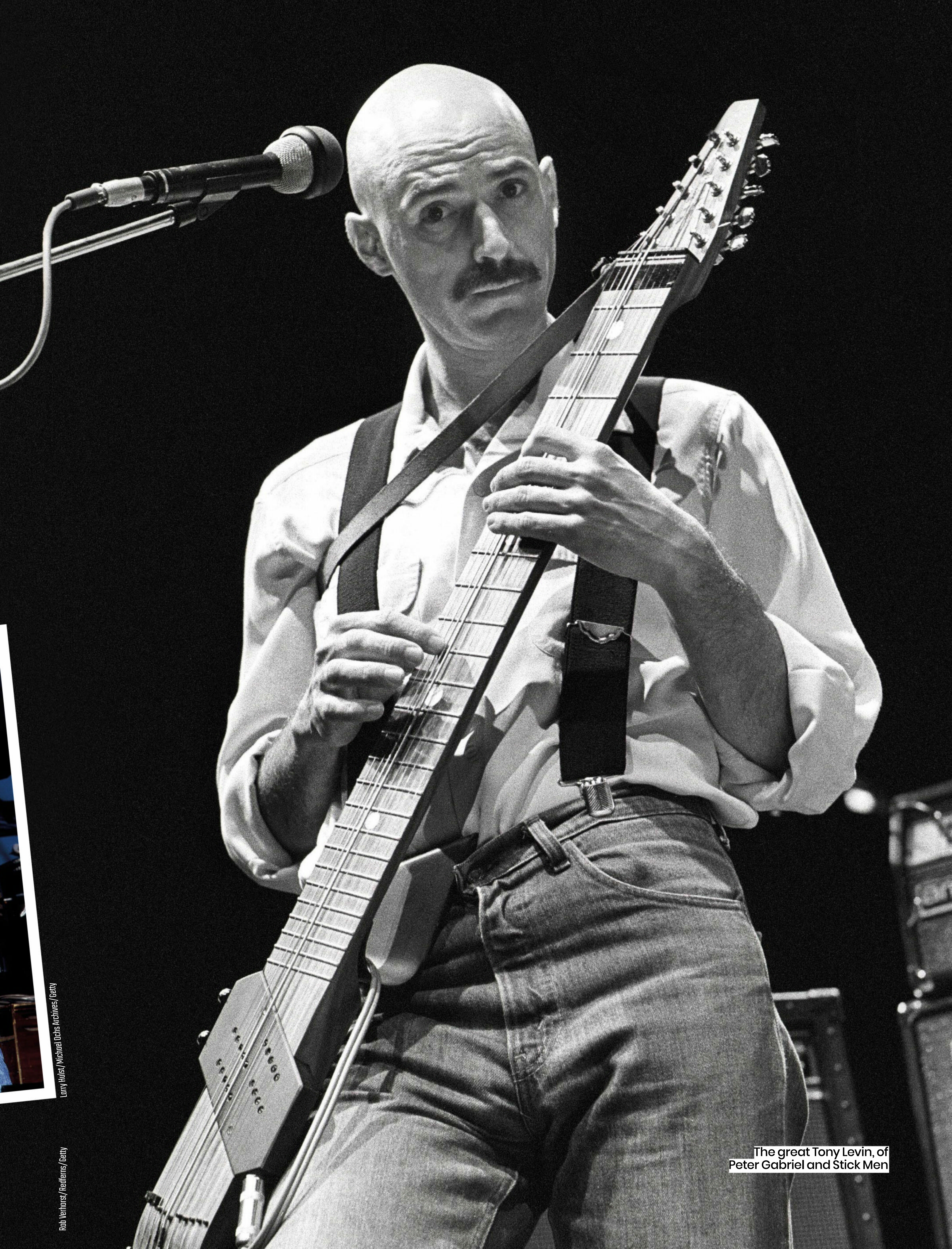
Its inventor continued to play music and tour, alongside managing his burgeoning business and teaching his "free-hands" technique. The Stick went through many iterations and tweaks in Chapman's lifetime. By his own estimate, Chapman produced more than 6000 of the instruments, all from his own workshop.

BP once asked Les Claypool of Primus if he had considered playing a Stick. "No way," replied the master. "That thing scares me." We agreed with this entirely. Rest in peace, Mr Chapman, and thank you.



Alphonso Johnson, pictured with Santana in 1987

Larry Hulst/Michael Ochs Archives/Getty



Rob Verhorst/Redferns/Getty

The great Tony Levin, of Peter Gabriel and Stick Men

Zoom Calling

The new B6 multi-FX is here

A new Zoom multi-effects unit for bass, the B6, has been launched at an approximately midmarket price point of $650—and you get a wide range of features for your money. It includes 11 bass amp and four DI tones, based on tube and solid-state models, a dual input (with adjustable impedance from 1M to 10M ohms) and an A/B switch, enabling players to quickly swap between two instruments. There's a 4.3" color touchscreen, nine footswitches, a looper, and 10 new preamp and effects models, including Bass Analog Octave, a '1073' preamp, and a new 'Djent preamp'. Review incoming.

Suhaimi Abdullah/Getty

Upright Citizens

Jazz sounds are inbound.

The late saxophonist John Coltrane arguably peaked with his iconic 1964 album *A Love Supreme*, bringing spiritual themes to his art; a new live album, *A Love Supreme: Live In Seattle* restates the album's impact. Coltrane's band features Jimmy Garrison plus a second bassist, Donald Rafael Garrett. Jazz lovers will also appreciate Esperanza Spalding's recent eighth album, *Songwrights Apothecary Lab*, containing 12 tracks, each assembled with the help of music therapists, neuroscientists, experts in Sufism and South Indian Carnatic music to evoke particular emotions.

'Down Under

Amp-, bass- and pedal-makers Ashdown have unveiled a new signature head for Guy Pratt, the Interstellar-600, and a new signature pedal, the Pedal Of Doom, for Geezer Butler. The former is based on Ashdown's ABM 900 head, and boasts extra features, such as two VU meters for input and output levels, a nine-band EQ section and, on the rear, an input

for Pratt's Moog Taurus pedal. The amp can be used with a footswitch to engage "the compression and the sub harmonics at fixed values to Guy's exacting specifications when required".

As for the Pedal Of Doom, Ashdown tell us: "Over the past 18 months, we have been talking about what a great bass distortion requires: Fundamentally it revolves around an EQ, a pre-determined structure to drive the right frequencies for the right track, to cut through or to sit back with rich depth."

Black Sabbath bassist Butler says of the new unit, "This is without a doubt the best sounding and engineered pedal I have ever played, and with my amp it truly has the sound of doom that I live for."

Mike Coppola/Getty

LOW END LIVE

Four unmissable tours for bass lovers to check out in 2022

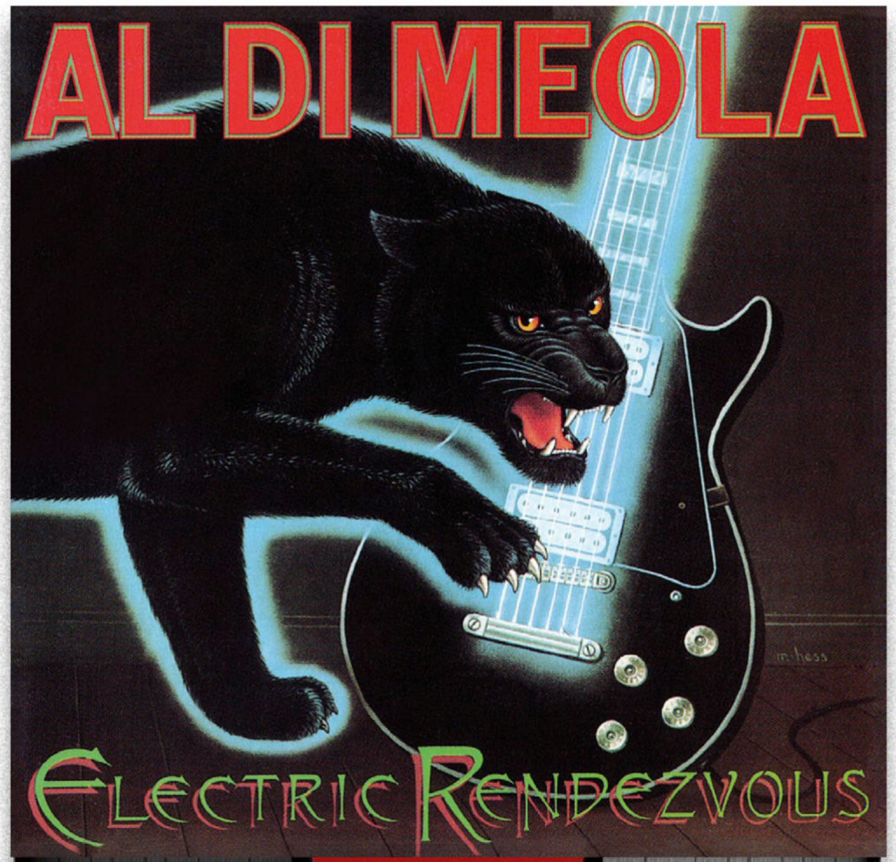
2021 was supposed to be the year that the live music industry got back to normal, but we know now that it'll be 2022 at the earliest before we're all jumping around in the front row in serious numbers. A whole range of cool tours have been announced by a range of optimistic bands, which has been rewarding to see, so let's hope conditions continue to improve—because plans are for a whole lot of great bass players to hit the road.

Make sure you catch the **Red Hot Chili Peppers**, whose impending world tour will see Flea and crew a-funking their way through 32 cities around the planet. Recently rejoined by their *Blood Sugar Sex Magik*-era guitarist John Frusciante, the freaky foursome will be visiting Europe in June and July, before a full US run until September. Support will mostly come from our chum Thundercat, alongside Haim, Beck, the Strokes, and others.

Then there's **Tool**, whose dates are always a light-and-sound extravaganza; you can witness the slinky-fingered Justin Chancellor and band in the USA in January to March, before a European leg right up until late May. Keep an eye out too for **Cannibal Corpse**, whose relentlessly violent death metal should shake off those winter blues, especially as their music is underpinned by the fearsomely talented Alex Webster. Catch them in February and March in North America.

> **Keep an eye out for Cannibal Corpse, whose violent death metal should shake off those winter blues**

Rather more subtle bass vibes come from **Peter Hook** and his band The Light, who will be playing 26 dates in North America in August and September 2022. The tour, *Joy Division: A Celebration*, will see them perform the albums *Unknown Pleasures* and *Closer*, with an opening set of New Order songs. "Aside from some one-off incidental dates, this is the first time the band have toured both iconic albums in the same show in North America, and the concerts are bound to be hugely special," we're told. See the show if you can; after all, you won't hear those classic bass parts anywhere else.



IN THE Groove

AL DI MEOLA · ELECTRIC RENDEZVOUS (COLUMBIA, 1982)

The master: Anthony Jackson at his peak

Pau Bergen/Redferns/Getty

Former Megadeth bass player **David Ellefson** salutes Al DiMeola's *Electric Rendezvous*

"The late Seventies and early Eighties were my developmental era, when I was playing jazz band at high school and being introduced to Weather Report and Spyro Gyra. The timing of this album was perfect in that context, because it came out the year before I graduated high school and moved to Los Angeles.

"This is the perfect Anthony Jackson record for me. It's the album that sat most comfortably in my wheelhouse, as a rock and metal guy. He can be a real pocket player, and he does that on this album, because these are actual songs rather than experimental jazz compositions. I loved that his tone sat inside the kick drum: He just owns it with the pick, and he's using a flanger, too.

Getty

"One thing that might not be obvious is that Al DiMeola was also a major influence on my bass playing. One thing I liked about Al's playing is that he's got this really tight staccato. That fast, electric picking style is very metal to me, and I adapted some of his guitar playing style into my pick bass playing. I usually credited my tone on the early Megadeth albums to Stanley Clarke, because my Jackson bass with Rotosound strings went through a Gallien-Krueger amp and headed to Hartke cabinets, but the performance of it is really more Al DiMeola.

"This is more of a rock-jazz album than it is a jazz-rock album, if that makes sense. Al DiMeola was a precursor to Joe Satriani, in a way, because he wrote songs that had distinct verses, choruses and refrains. That was what I liked about it, because one thing I don't like about traditional jazz is that it goes off at tangents and it never repeats itself. This is the perfect electric jazz record."

Ellefson's new band, The Lucid, has a self-titled debut album out now. Info: thelucidofficial.bandcamp.com

> **"*Electric Rendezvous* is the perfect Anthony Jackson record for me—it sits most comfortably in my wheelhouse"**

Laying down the lines with that iconic Yamaha.

Getty

THIS MONTH

Peter Hook

The co-founder of Joy Division and New Order looks back.

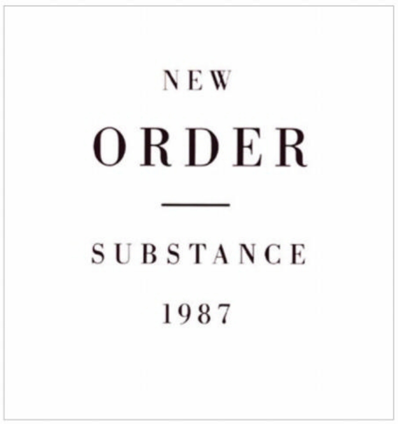
Peter Hook was born Peter Woodhead in 1956, and was the towering talent on the bass behind the seminal bands Joy Division and New Order, as well as projects including Monaco and the short-lived three-bassist group Freebass. Famed for his melodic, often high-register bass-lines, Hooky's current project is Peter Hook & The Light, in which he plays bass and sings alongside his long-time collaborator David Potts and his own son, Jack Bates. Hooky's long career has been one of peaks and troughs, with the music's success both in terms of sales and quality occasionally hindered by record company shenanigans, poor decisions, and sheer bad luck. His Rochdale studio in the late Eighties played host to most of the upcoming Madchester bands, from the Stone Roses to the Happy Mondays, all of whom he says blagged cheap studio time and then, once they made it, "fucked off to London, Switzerland, fucking Berlin, after breaking my speakers and turning my engineer into a drug addict", as he puts it. The legendary bassist, who has chronicled his life over three essential volumes of autobiography, sat down with *BP* and talked us through five albums that have marked key points over the years.

NEW ORDER

Power, Corruption & Lies (1983)

"Could we have got a new singer?"

"This was a very interesting marriage of new technology, new sounds and old sounds. Ian Curtis's suicide had taken us to a dark place, and really weighed heavily on us through *Movement*, which was like a Joy Division album with New Order vocals. *Power, Corruption & Lies* is full New Order; there's a different feel, a brightness coming through. It'd been very painful, and we were grieving, so to start again without Ian does make me wonder whether we could have done a Queen, and got a new singer, but not been as good. We were scared about being something we weren't, and without Ian Curtis, in no way did we feel like Joy Division. We couldn't have pretended otherwise. There is a pureness that's lost by not having the correct line-up. Keith Richards admitted that without Brian Jones it wasn't the Rolling Stones, and now without Charlie Watts it isn't either, but they carry on, so it depends on your outlook. This album was New Order finding our feet, and we were definitely nearing the goal on it; there were a few near-misses, but by *Technique* they'd all come to fruition, and we were scoring. *Power, Corruption & Lies* is about us being able to move on, and enjoy what we were doing."



NEW ORDER
Substance (1987)

"Some magnificent bass riffs here..."

"*Substance* [by] New Order was a compilation instigated by [Factory label owner] Tony Wilson, because his Jaguar had a CD player and he wanted to be able to play our singles in his car. It was the greatest album we never made. Tracks like 'Blue Monday', 'Thieves Like Us', 'Everything's Gone Green', and 'Temptation' really do sum up the band very well.

"It is celebratory, while the Joy Division *Substance* has a sort of unfulfilled, melancholic feel to it. The *Unknown Pleasures* and *Closer* albums have some magnificent bass riffs; I think they sound more band-like. Now you can only put that down to the loss of Ian, whether it had an unconscious or conscious effect. The melodies are very apparent on the New Order LP, whereas they're not as melodic as the Joy Division record, where the bass sits more in the songs.

"I think we were still finding our direction here, whereas with the New Order singles I was becoming more confident and relaxed in my own skin, and in a funny way they feature more bass. We had always left the singles off the albums, as punks, because we thought we were ripping off our fans—but both these albums fulfil the same role in that if I had to explain either band to anyone, these two LPs would be that education."

NEW ORDER
Technique (1989)

"It was time to go somewhere cool."

"We recorded our albums in London, but as they went on we got in increasingly more trouble, so it was time to go somewhere cooler where we wouldn't get distracted. It was my idea to go to Ibiza, which sounded chilled, laid-back, comfortable and beautiful. The studio was utter crap, but I chose not to tell my fellow bandmembers. We ended up discovering San Antonio just as acid house kicked off, discovering ecstasy, and it was absolutely, uniquely wild and cool. Most of *Technique* was written next to a graveyard in Manchester! The only track we actually wrote in Ibiza was 'Fine Time', which sticks out like a sore thumb. It sounds more like a *Republic* track and is a bridge between the two albums. It captured the summer vibe: Hope, relaxation, and taking stock of your life. We didn't have a great time making *Technique*; there was a lot of jostling for position. We finished it in Peter Gabriel's studio [Real World] in Box, Wiltshire. Later, I was in Heaton Park, and saw this guy with a massive ghetto-blaster booming out a track and I thought it sounded wonderful. So I ran after him and said, 'Mate, mate, who is this? It's fucking fantastic' and he looked at me like I was a lunatic and said 'It's one of yours, Hooky. It's 'Run' from *Technique*.' Oh my fucking God!"

NEW ORDER
Republic (1993)

"I realize why the fans love this."

"I used to be very vocal about *Republic* being an album to avoid, because we were so disengaged from each other doing it, and I couldn't listen to it without feeling sick. Then, with Peter Hook & The Light, we'd played all the Joy Division and New Order albums up to *Republic*, live, and I thought, "Oh my God, how is this gonna go down?"

"But you know what, I loved it. There was enough of me and the other New Order members in there. We never played it live with New Order, but this rescued it and I was able to finish it off to my taste. Ironically, it was a far bigger-selling album than *Technique*. People were able to see something that I wouldn't look at. It encapsulated all the failures of and frustration with the Hacienda [club] and Factory, which we transferred onto ourselves as New Order, which was stupid, now I come to think of it.

"Once I'd got rid of all that stuff, and had a chance to look at it properly, I realized why the fans loved the album. The Light were looking at me, going "You fucking idiot, Hooky" because they could see the good things in the music, and my son could see them too, but it was just what we'd been through making it [that obscured the results]. New Order hardly play any of the songs from *Republic*, but we play them live. I've got it back."

MONACO
Monaco (2000)

"This is a true survival record."

"When I got pissed off with New Order and left, I decided I was going to do something completely different. So with [his first post-New Order band] Revenge I decided not to play the bass at first, then when I did, did it in a different way.

"Changing styles so abruptly made me more unhappy, though. My collaborator Dave Potts kept saying, "Why are you writing these songs differently? Write the way you did in New Order, with the bass as the base for the melody." And, lo and behold, in Monaco, I realized what an idiot I'd been and how you need to stick to what you're good at. It came at a tough time for me personally, when my first marriage exploded, but as Tony Wilson said about the Hacienda, it made New Order miserable, so we kept making great music.

"All great music comes from pain. This is a true survival record: We were coming back. It was very successful all around the world, but then the record label showed all the [rock] bands the door and just signed boy bands. Then I made the biggest mistake ever, which was fucking going back to New Order.

"That's the thing about playing cards—you get a few wild cards, some wins, push yourself and lose the lot. You have to know when to fold them... and I've never been good at that."

I WAS THERE!

A historic moment in bass world—recalled by those who were there to see it

When Jimi Hendrix asked Jack Bruce if he could play with Cream in 1967, what did Jack say?

Main pic: Cream in full flow (from left): Jack Bruce, Ginger Baker and Eric Clapton. Insets: Jack and the great Jimi Hendrix.

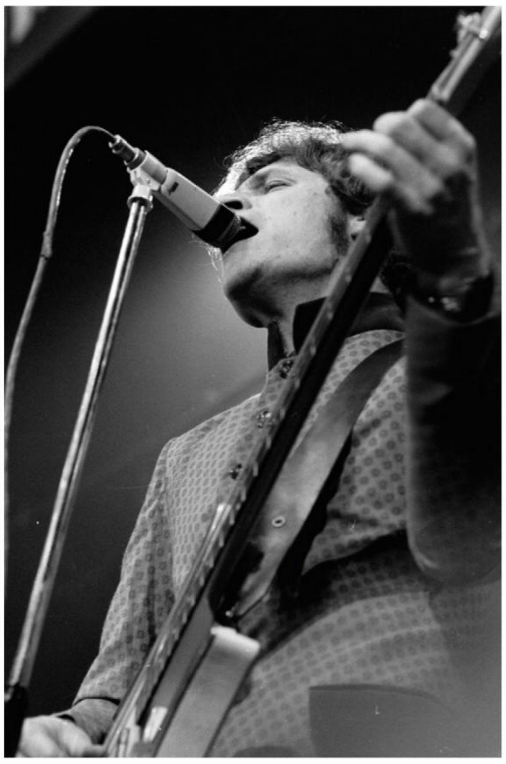
"I first met Jimi Hendrix when Cream did a gig at the Regents Polytechnic in London," the late Jack Bruce told *BP* a few years back. "Coincidentally, the guys that became Pink Floyd were in the audience, and apparently seeing that event made them become Pink Floyd. When I saw them recently, they told me that. I knew they were there, but I didn't know that we were responsible for them getting together. Whether that's a good thing or a bad thing, I leave that for you to decide..."

The great bassist continued: "I was just having a pre-gig pint in a pub across the road, and in comes this guy who turns out to be Jimi Hendrix. Now, we had already heard about Jimi on the grapevine. He came up to me and said "Hi. I would like to sit in with the band." I said it was fine with me, but he'd obviously have to check it out with Eric [Clapton, guitar] and Ginger [Baker, drums]. So we went across to the gig, and Eric immediately said yes and Ginger said: 'Oh, I don't know about that'. But Jimi came on and plugged into my bass amp, and as far as I can remember, he just blew us all away.

"Hendrix had a positive effect on everybody, especially guitar players. He came to the sessions when we did 'White Room' in New York, and was very encouraging about the song. He came up to me and said: 'Wow, I wish I could write something like that'. I said: 'Jimi, what you've got to realize is that I probably [stole] it off you!'"

Rumour has it that Hendrix and Bruce were planning to form a band together. We asked him if there was any truth to this... "That was actually going to happen! Jimi was all for having a play. At that point he was trying to find a new direction, musically, and that could easily have been it. I was all for it, because I think one of the problems Jimi had was that he didn't play with people who kicked him up the butt, basically. I'm not knocking [Hendrix's drummer] Mitch Mitchell, but to me he was like a British jazz player, he was kind of laid-back. He played a lot of rhythms—but I don't think it pushed Jimi in the way that we would have."

What would *that* supergroup have sounded like? Rest in peace, Jack and Jimi.



Getty

Low Life

HOLIDAY SEASON GIGS

Get ready for those winter shows

Maximize your live bass playing with Tax The Heat bassist and BIMM Senior Lecturer Antonio Angotti.

BIMM INSTITUTE

As we start to approach the holidays, we hit a peak season for gigging, whether that's touring original music, or taking on the deluge of Christmas parties and weddings. As the live industry starts to pick up again, it's important that we ready ourselves for this intense period. Having had plenty of my own experiences doing both, I felt it was a prime opportunity to impart some honest truths for tackling these live scenarios.

MANAGE YOUR EXPECTATIONS

Not every gig will be a good experience—there, I said it. Perhaps you already knew that, but we often find ourselves, almost romantically, holding out hope for a good show every time, despite so many factors being outside of our control. As easy as it is to dwell on the negatives when they do happen, don't forget that it's a useful learning experience, either for rectifying the things within our control, or making peace with aspects that weren't 'perfect'. Hey, you just earned money from playing bass—so take it on the chin and move on to the next one.

THE FUNCTION(AL) GIG

One thing that I quickly came to realize when playing weddings, was how our enjoyment of the gig completely hinged on the type of guests in the wedding party. Those that appreciated the value of a live band really help to make the overall atmosphere hugely enjoyable. Sometimes, though, you'll encounter a wedding party who are just there for the ceremony, leaving us resigned to playing the boring, functional role of background jukebox. Sometimes we can forget that weddings are a scenario where people aren't coming to specifically see us play, but we must remain professional and resilient in the face of muted response. As long as the newly married couple are happy, then that's what counts!

MANAGE DEAD TIME

There's a lot of waiting around with gigging. This is valuable time that you could utilize for a variety of things. I always take my Vox Bass amPlug and some headphones with me for some quick practice, or for when I need to warm up or work out last-minute parts. Conversely, don't feel like you always need to use the time to play bass. Taking time to decompress and relax is just as important, especially when it comes to maintaining your mental health during busy gigging periods.

ORGANIZE YOURSELF

If you don't do this already, start using a journal or calendar to keep track of your gigs. This will prevent double-booking yourself in addition to highlighting the availability you might have for more bookings. Make sure you also add details of the location and fee for each gig, so that you can plan your travel timings and track your monthly income. I would also highly recommend teaming up with another bassist or two to form a dep team that can take on bookings that you can't fit in, or to throw gigs your way if they are not able to take them.

The Woodshed

ACOUSTICS ANALYZED

Get to know solid-body acoustics

Ace luthier Rob Elrick brings decades of wisdom to the table. Listen up as he delivers the verdict!

Economically-accessible digital modelling devices first flooded into the market just over 20 years ago. Since then, increasingly sophisticated digital amplifier and speaker emulators have become common tools for musicians. This technology marked the beginning of a new 'post-fidelity' era.

Emerging technology has undeniably created some impressive new product categories. Among the digital amp emulators and multi-effect processors, a new generation of Class D solid state amplifiers also emerged. Less than a generation ago, bass players had to transport amplification the size of refrigerators if they hoped to keep pace with a live drummer and a 25-watt guitar combo. These increasingly diminutive amplifiers have greatly lightened our load.

However, it's unfortunate that an insatiable desire to get more from less has created an environment in which many newer bass players have never experienced the fidelity, nuance, and dynamism of genuine tube amplification. Too often, instrument output signals are delivered into these digital environments, depending on their microprocessors to enhance the final result. For some players, their bass has become little more than a realistic video-game controller, dependent on digital devices to create their 'sound'. This has also resulted in lower performance expectations from their instruments, which may be a secondary, or tertiary consideration—and as is the tendency of consumer markets, the market responded.

Still, it's important to remember that even a solid-body electric bass guitar is an acoustic instrument, not a *Guitar Hero* accessory. Acoustic performance is an important contributing factor in your sonic end-result. If that comes as a surprise, it shouldn't. In the next couple of issues, I'll dig into what it is that 'resonates' in your 'acoustic' guitar. Many professional disciplines invoke their own unique 'rule of three', and the practice of building basses is no different. The rule of three which I'll be discussing relates to the holy trinity of bass fabrication—the body, neck, and fretboard, the primary components most critical to every instrument.

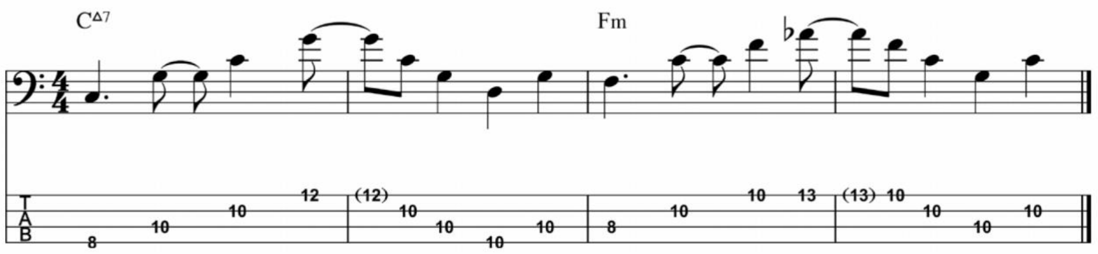
LET'S BORROW CHORDS

Nik Preston takes us through ways to exploit this useful theory

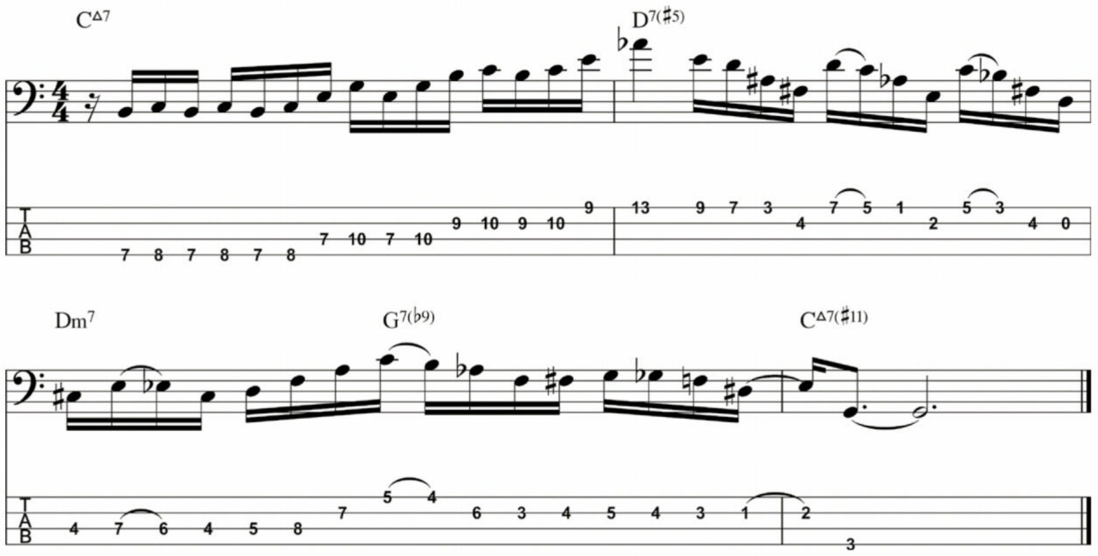
The concept of modal interchange is actually very simple: a song borrows chords from a parallel scale. By parallel we mean a different type of scale built on the same tonic, so for example we use chords from the key of C major, but then we may also use chords, within a passage or piece, from C minor. It doesn't constitute a modulation as such, as the tonal center remains the same—it's merely a change of tonality.

This is a compositional device that is apparent in most Western music to varying degrees, and we encounter it in the popular repertoire quite frequently. If this is a new concept to you, it will expand your knowledge of chord progressions and compositional techniques significantly, while also developing your aural skills. Have fun!

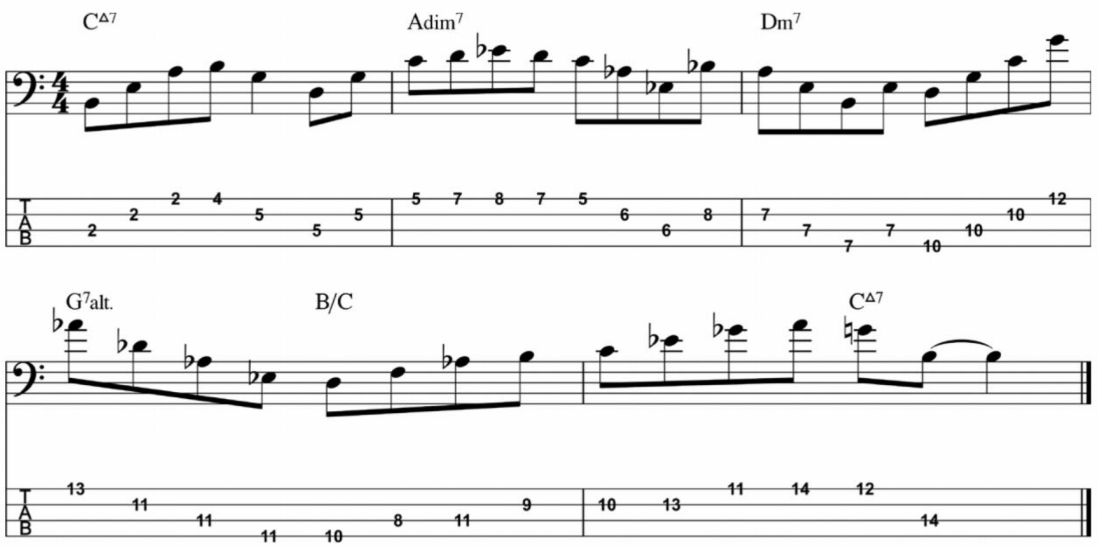
EXERCISE ONE



EXERCISE TWO



EXERCISE THREE



EXERCISE 1

At its most simple, the change from major to minor reflects the technique we are likely to see most often. In this example, you can see a line over a Cmaj7 and then an Fmin: This chord is chord IV in C natural minor: a parallel scale. You'll have heard this type of harmonic movement many times and, as such, it's well worth spending some time practicing progressions which feature this technique.

EXERCISE 2

In this example, we're extending the concept to enable chords to be drawn from a different type of scale built on our C tonic. In this instance, we're moving from Cmaj6 to a D7#5: This chord is actually chord II in the C whole-tone scale. Although this is a symmetrical scale, we encounter this kind of movement fairly frequently. Even in instances where the composer didn't originally denote the D7 as having a raised 5, many experienced players may choose to employ the C (or D, as it has exactly the same notes due to its symmetrical structure) whole tone scale.

EXERCISE 3

Continuing the theme of symmetrical scales, this example illustrates a fairly common use of diminished harmony in this context. A great many jazz standards include diminished chords which are drawn from the diminished scale built on the tonic. Here, we can see the C maj7 moving to an Adim7, moving to a Dmin7 and then a G7alt before resolving to a B/C and finally to a Cmaj7. Both the Adim7 and the B/C are actually drawn from a C whole half diminished scale—further exemplifying the use of harmony extracted from parallel scales. We encounter diminished chords frequently in the Western popular repertoire: You most often see the diminished chord being used in this way, or resolving up a semitone. The latter isn't necessarily an example of the same compositional technique, though, and should be analyzed separately.

DRIVE TIME

Ever wondered how **Lemmy** got those terrifying bass tones... and how you can get them yourself? Grab your earplugs —we're going in.

Words: Joel McIver, Jamie Blaine **Photography:** Jack Grisham, Getty

Red Bull
ENERGY DRINK

© Ian Dickson/Redferns
With Hawkwind in London in 1973

"I'm made for bass—I'm supposed to play bass, that's what I'm supposed to do," said Ian 'Lemmy' Kilmister, who departed for the great gig in the sky in December 2015. In our world, bass is indeed what the great man remains best known for, but let's not forget that he was many other things, too—a singer, songwriter, guitarist, blues harp player, TV personality, actor, and most certainly a *bon viveur*.

You could even label Lemmy an intellectual, arguably, as he was widely read, politically informed, and able to discourse learnedly on a number of philosophical subjects. The great contrast there, of course, was that he indulged in the rock'n'roll lifestyle with as much commitment as any of the elite, at least in his younger days, working his way through speed, booze, and women at scale. How he made it to 70—just—is presumably down to good genes and the avoidance of heroin, the one drug that he refused to take, the stuff having been responsible for the death of an early girlfriend.

Born the son of a clergyman in 1945, Lemmy—said to be so nicknamed because of his habit of borrowing cash from his bandmates, we're told, although this was never fully confirmed—was initially a guitarist in the obscure R&B band the Rockin' Vickers. When the psychedelia boom took off in the mid-Sixties he joined the Sam Gopal Dream before roadieing briefly for Jimi Hendrix, but his career really took off when he joined space-rockers Hawkwind in 1970.

He told writer Chris Shonting: "What I liked about Hawkwind was that it was the first time I played bass, and I found out that I could be a good bass player. So I became a bass player, and I was really good at it, you know? That was a great thing for me—kind of an eye-opener—and also there was a lot of freedom within that band to play bass. I did a lot of fill-ins and a lot of smart shit... You know, I was showing off as usual. What's it for if you can't show off? It's rock'n'roll, so you might as well."

> "What's it all for if you can't show off? It's rock'n'roll, so you might as well"

Talking to *BP*, he said that his bass playing "was based on guitar. I found out about drone strings, where you let the A or the D string ring and play the melody on the G. It falls in very well behind the guitar. I used a lot of chords, too."

Fired in 1975 after being wrongfully detained for drugs on the US/Canadian border—the irony of being ejected for this reason from the infamously drug-addled Hawkwind always amused him—Lemmy formed Motörhead, and went on to much better things.

SPEAKERS CORNER

Frank Bello of Anthrax recalls a bass 'moment' on tour with Lemmy

"I loved everything about Motörhead. We played with them so often that we became tight with their crew as well as the guys themselves. I would watch their sets from the monitor board at the side, because I wanted to see how the magic worked. I always watched how Lemmy picked the strings, and I realized he was using two different types of pick.

"His onstage sound was ferocious. Those Marshalls were easily the loudest thing on the stage, hands down. I loved every second of it. He and the drummer, Mikkey Dee, would go at each other all the time, because Mikkey had Lemmy's amps—basically an entire PA system—blasting away behind him. He'd shout 'You're fucking killing me, man!' and Lemmy would shout back at him, just like Charlie [Benante, Anthrax drummer] and I do. Every rhythm section does it.

"One day, I was watching Lemmy play at soundcheck, and I'm headbanging away, and he sees me standing there. Suddenly he barks 'Come 'ere!', and I go over, scared to death, thinking 'What's going to happen here?'.

"Would you believe it, he takes off his bass, puts it on me and says 'Go!' Just like that. I was so fucking scared, and Lemmy could see that I was afraid and yelled to his tech, 'Turn it up!'

"Now, if you know the opening scene of *Back To The Future*, where Michael J. Fox stands in front of a massive speaker, that was me right then. I swear to God, when I went up to it and played a big E note, it was exactly like that scene—the speaker reacted so hard that I was pushed back.

"I look over at Lemmy, and of course he's laughing in that evil way.

"Hargh, hargh, hargh! Pretty good, eh?"

TONE TALK

How to get that terrifying Lemmy sound

Describing the tone of Lemmy's overdriven bass isn't easy, although many have tried. The classic Motörhead line-up with guitarist 'Fast' Eddie Clarke and drummer Phil 'Philthy' Taylor didn't sound like other bands, precisely because of the sound emanating from Lemmy' speakers.

Clarke explained, "He plays a Marshall amp with all the treble up and all the bass down, and he also plays a Rickenbacker bass, so if you can imagine the sound that you would get from that, it's kind of like a rhythm guitar more than a bass."

More colorfully, Taylor remarked, "Our sound is not exactly as clear as a lot of other bands because of the way Lemmy plays bass. He plays it like a rhythm guitar, and he also likes a very trebly sort of 'clappy' sort of sound. The most bassy, bottomy sounds you hear are the tom-toms and the kick drums, because Lemmy's sound is more like a horrible sort of screeching, scratchy rhythm guitar with lots of bass on it, rather than like a bass guitar."

Well, we asked Lemmy himself in 2003 and his bass tech Tim Butcher in 2015 how this uncompromising tone was reached. "I'll tell you the controls, left to right," said Lemmy, adding, "Presence is at three o'clock. Bass is off. Middle is full. Treble is off. Volume at three o'clock." By that he meant that Presence and Volume were at approximately 8 out of 10, a fact confirmed by Butcher, who also ran down his gear list, as follows, in an interview with *BP* writer Jamie Blaine:

Bass Rickenbacker 4004LK, customized by luthier TC Ellis with three Rickenbacker humbuckers, gold hardware, maple neck, rosewood fretboard with star inlays and hand-carved oak leaf relief with white checked binding. Bridge pickup only, tone and volume knobs full up.
Strings Jim Dunlop Icon Series 50, 65, 85, 100
Pick Dunlop 1.14 nylon MIDI with double-sided tape for grip.
Heads Marshall JMP 'Murder One' Superbass II amps, mostly from 1973. EQ settings as above.
Cabs 4x12" and custom 4x15, one stack on each side of drum riser.
Effects None.

Butcher also told Jamie: "As far as how to sound like Lemmy, I have let a few well-known bassists loose on Lem's rig, and no-one sounds close to him. He has his own unique style, which is loosely based on banging it really hard!"

Plug and play today!

© Robert John Photography

Lemmy with the tools of his trade in 2014

STUDIO LINES

The bass didn't always go down smoothly on Motörhead albums, according to producer Ed Stasium, who worked on their *1916* album in 1991... and just about survived.

"Lemmy had this huge glass, maybe 12 inches tall, which he would fill up to an inch from the top with ice and Jack Daniel's, and add a little Coca-Cola. Needless to say, things got a little confused: [Motörhead drummer] Philthy couldn't remember his parts, and we spent an entire day going over the songs and getting them right, and then we recorded them."

"We started mixing at a studio called One On One, owned by a guy named Richard Landis, which had a solid-state SSL 4000 series desk. The three songs we were mixing were 'Going To Brazil', 'Love Me Forever' and 'No Voices In The Sky', which I think is a great song.

"So I'm mixing one of the songs, and Lemmy walks in. He had taken one of the mixes on cassette to the Rainbow Bar & Grill the previous evening, and he wasn't in a good mood. He said, 'Man, I went to the Rainbow last night and I put on this fuckin' cassette, and there's no fuckin' bass on it! I couldn't hear any fuckin' bass at all'.

"So I said, 'Lemmy, you didn't *want* any bottom end on your bass', because when he plays through his Marshall amp he rolls off all the bass—that's his sound. We'd tried to get more bottom on there: He didn't want to use a direct box, so we snuck one in—we were hiding it from him. It may have been a little devious, but I wanted to get some bottom on the record."

"He'd found the direct box track and was like, 'What's this? What's this? What's this?', and he went and sat in the back. I don't remember what was happening, because my blood was rushing at this point. He sat back behind me, and I started mixing again and he said, 'No, no, no, no!' and he pulled on the back of my chair. I don't think he did it on purpose, but the chairs were kinda flimsy, and as he pulled, the chair—with me in it—fell backwards.

"It was accidental and I didn't get hurt, but he was saying 'Argggh!' and going on about how there was no bass. It was a gnarly situation!"

"I just turn it up really loud and hit it really hard!" he once growled at us. "No effects. I've never really used any pedals. I tried a wah-wah once, but it doesn't really work with bass. It's pointless, isn't it? Effects always fuck up anyway, and then the feedback starts howling, and you're standing there like a dickhead."

A Marshall user for life, he explained "I've got two old Marshall JMP Super Bass 2s, with 4x15s and 4x12s on each side. I got the 4x15s in America. We went down to this guy's house, and his wife showed us this summerhouse in the garden. We had to dig our way through all this furniture and shit, and there were these two cabs with the covers on. She pulled the covers off and they were Marshalls from the Sixties. They haven't made 4x15s for a long time. They were brand new, never been used. And I got the two of them for four hundred bucks!"

As for bass guitars, Lemmy usually—but not always, you may be surprised to hear—preferred to play a Rickenbacker, ending his career with a signature model, the 4004LK. Picking the strings near the neck, he came up with an indistinct tone that provided more of a texture than actual individual notes. We asked him if the strings lacked tension when plucked at that point, and he explained: "Well, I don't use small-gauge strings. I'm a great believer that there should be heavy-gauge, medium, and light and that's all, otherwise it's too confusing."

Understandably enough, he didn't take particularly kindly to naive observations from us such as 'The bass isn't very clear in your songs', batting that one aside with "Well, you see I don't mind the bass getting lost, because I think a band should sound like three or four guys playing together. It shouldn't sound like four fuckin' solo instruments. I don't understand why you'd want to hear just one instrument. I just see the wall, I don't see the bricks on their own... I like it to sound like a band, like the Beatles always did. Even Hendrix, you couldn't tell what the fuck was going on with him. There'd be so many guitars on there. I like to hear a band, that's the idea of being in a band. You play together!"

"I don't use effects. I just turn it up really loud and hit it really hard!"

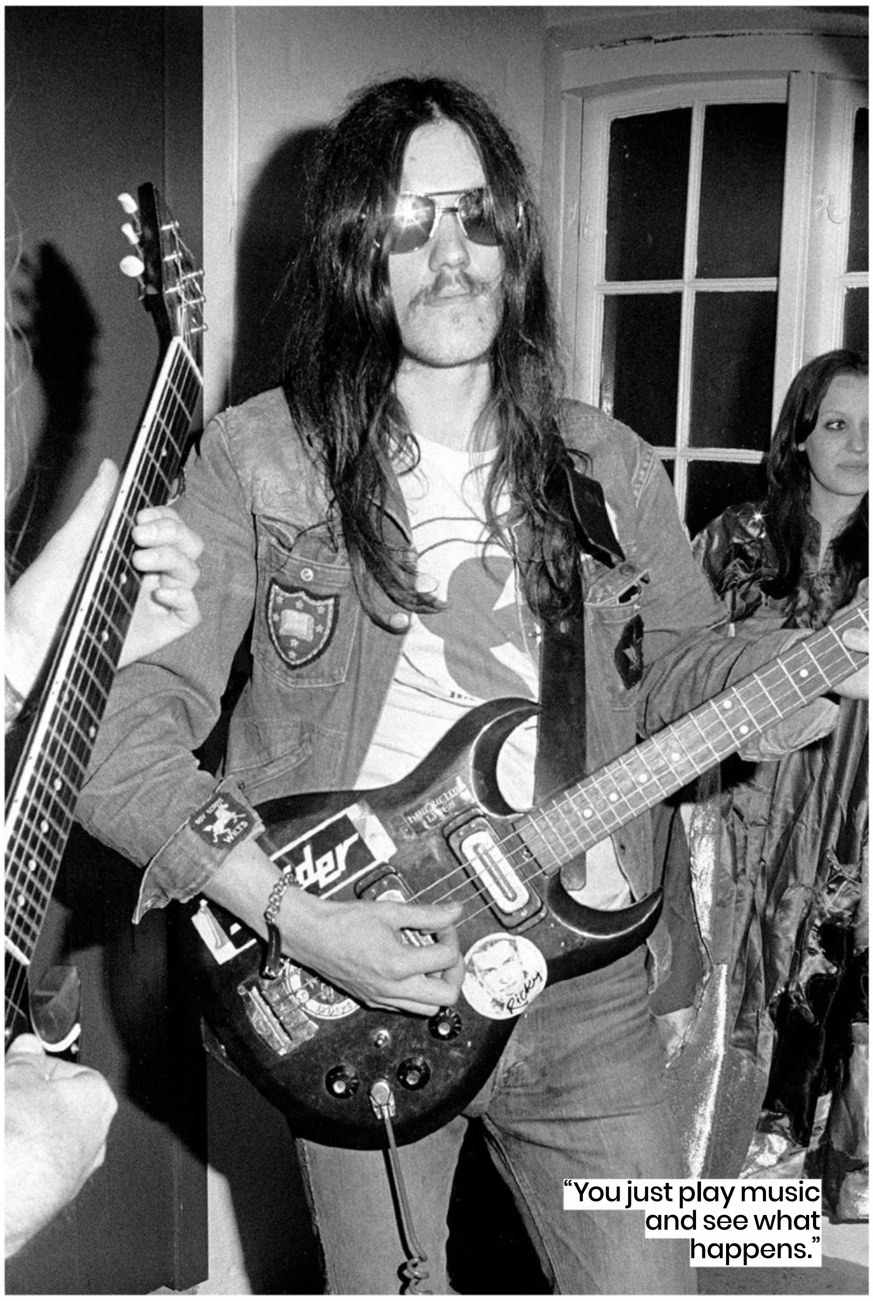
Never precious about the secrets of his tone, Lemmy was the polar opposite of certain bassists who we come across at *BP* who refuse to divulge the contents of their pedalboards as if they contain state secrets. Perhaps this was because he didn't bother with effects, but we like to think it was because he just didn't care about that stuff. As you can see from our Tone Talk boxout on page 19, he was happy to reveal his chosen EQ – you can plug in and play for yourself.

Our final interview with Lemmy took place on September 9, 2015, when *BP* writer Jamie Blaine went to meet him in Indianapolis. "My solo album's nearly finished," Lemmy told Jamie. "I've just got one more track to do. I sing on all the songs and play bass on some. It should be out by the middle of 2016." As for the future of Motörhead, he said "We'll be in England early next year, doing some shows with our old friends Girlschool, that'll be nice. Then we'll do another Motörhead record. I want to do another, for sure."

As Lemmy was obviously in poor health, Jamie took the opportunity to thank him for "all he's given, for the endless tours and countless anthems, for never being anything less than exactly who he is," a wise decision in retrospect.

"Lemmy fumbles with his hands," he wrote, "and for a moment is silent. "Ah, you don't ever think that way, really," he says finally. "You just play music with a few guys and see what happens. And here we are 40 years later." And with that, Lemmy Kilmister laughs, lights a cigarette and heads off towards the stage."

Heartbreaking stuff, especially as neither solo album nor new Motörhead album has materialized, but after six years, he'd be laughing in a mixture of amusement and scorn if he knew that we were still mourning him. It's time to move on, hence this cover feature, designed to enable you to make an enjoyably obnoxious noise on bass. Put on your favorite Hawkwind or Motörhead song, pour a drink, and let the good times roll. It's definitely what he would have wanted.


"You just play music and see what happens."

© Jorgen Angel/Redferns

© Steve Parke

THE SOUND OF BASS

What do you do when a pandemic shuts down your business? In the case of bassist, songwriter, and former bass store owner **Kristin Bidwell**, you pivot, adapt, and come back fighting

Interview: Joel McIver **Photography:** Steve Parke

The Bay Area native, now Boston-based musician and entrepreneur Kristin Bidwell has fulfilled many roles in the world of bass, as she tells us while preparing her new album, *Net Zero*. Bidwell attended the Berklee College of Music, where she completed a dual bachelor's degree in Music Business and Music Production and Engineering before going on to study entrepreneurship at Masters level. Since then she has built parallel careers in music, both on and off the stage.

Who influenced you as a bass player in your early career, Kristin?

Carol Kaye was the first teacher I studied with out of college. I messed around with bass in high school, and studied bass with some friends during college, but I really wanted to do studio work and tour internationally. Carol taught me how to sight-read quickly: Her method was very easy. It's something I still use today. I would drive down to her house in southern California, and we'd do in-person lessons: It was fantastic. She's an amazing teacher, and she really pushed me to be able to sight-read well, so I give any and all studio credit to her.

When did you take up the bass?

I learned piano, guitar, and voice at an early age. My mom was the musician in the house, and she taught me a lot. When I was in high school, I saw my friend Lea play bass in rock bands, and thought she was a badass on stage. It looked like a lot of fun. From that point on, I wanted to play bass, so I picked it up and started taking lessons with various friends and practicing a ton. I went to Berklee to study music business and music production as a vocal principal, but I played bass so much that quite a few people thought I was actually a bass principal.

Which musicians have taught you most along the way?

I went to college with Justin Raines, a gospel bass player who plays with Israel Houghton and other artists. He really inspired me, and he was a phenomenal player, even back then. Victor Wooten was the first famous bass player that I saw play. In my first semester at Berklee, some friends were like, 'Hey, Victor Wooten's playing' and I was like, 'Who's that?' They were like, 'Just come'. And he blew me away. I met him that night for the first time, and he was the nicest person. I had him sign my bass, you know, as a geeky little 18-year-old fan. He's become a really good friend and mentor of mine. I bounce business ideas off of him, and I bounce musical ideas off of him. He's always been a positive and supportive person.

> **"The bass guitar is unique, with a unique group of players… it's like a family"**

There's Anthony Wellington too, who plays bass for Victor. I studied with Anthony for about four years, every week, in person. He's taught me more about music than anyone in my life. Anthony is a phenomenal educator, and his lessons opened up the instrument for me. He explained not just how the bass works, but explained music theory in a way that I didn't even learn at Berklee. He just made it so easy.

Jimmy Haslip has been a huge influence as well. I'm a fan of all of his work. He's produced and played on so many records, and he makes it so effortless. I met him about 10 years ago when he was playing in Maryland with Jeff Lorber. I actually showed up after a gig I played and I had my Tobias bass with me. He came up to me during their break and he was so friendly. Within five minutes, he asked, 'What endorsements do you have?' and he called Moody Straps and got me hooked up. He didn't even know me, so it was incredible that he just did that. I've taken a few lessons with Jimmy when he comes to town. He's always been very supportive, willing to listen to any musical ideas I have. I hope to work with him on a record someday.

Reggie Hamilton also shows me some awesome stuff on bass from time to time, and he has been a major influence as well. There are so many bass players that are phenomenal, that have shaped the way I view music, that I could go on for hours about this. It's like a family. The bass is unique, with a unique group of players.

Tell us what you've done since your college days.

I've spent a lot of my career focused on playing, teaching, and entrepreneurial endeavors. I've played mostly with indie artists which have taken me on international tours, as well as a lot of local gigs throughout the US. I have spent time building my businesses and working in audio. Back to Bassics, my bass guitar school, has been open for 10 years. We won the Best of Baltimore Award for best school in 2021. I also owned and operated Fluency 34, a

KRISTIN BIDWELL

high-end bass shop which was open for four years in Brooklyn, New York until we shut down during the pandemic. Other than selling high-end bass gear, I really enjoyed bringing the community together for events such as clinics and performances. We had artists such as Dwayne 'DW' Wright, Anthony Wellington, Bubby Lewis, Justin Raines, and Sharay Reed perform clinics. It was a very fun place to be. I miss it.

You now have another gig as an audio consultant.
I'm a huge audio nerd, and I always have been. I started doing live sound in high school, and after Berklee I worked at Dangerous Music Studios in New York City. Napster had hit when I was in college, and the recording studio industry got in big trouble, so in 2007, I fell into audiovisual consulting. My acoustics professor at Berklee was a consultant, and he introduced me to the industry, and I started working for his firm. I'm still consulting today, so that's kept me going through this pandemic, that and teaching lessons.

I moved to Boston this year to join a firm called Cavanaugh Tocci Associates, where I'm a Senior Consultant. We focus a lot on higher education and corporate work. It's really great, because it gives me the opportunity to research and think daily about new systems and new technologies.

I have to say, it's a really great career path for anyone interested in audio. I didn't even know that it was an option. When I was at Berklee, I thought audio just meant live sound or studio work, so I was shocked to hear that there was this job. Being able to combine audio with architecture is really the dream gig for me.

What does the job of audio consultant involve?
I work on audiovisual system designs for commercial buildings, working with architect teams to design the systems. It's a blast: I get to use my knowledge of audio to design these awesome venues. A couple of the bigger audiovisual projects that I've worked on throughout my career have been the VIP suites at the San Francisco 49ers stadium, and I recently designed Martin Scorsese's new screening room.

What bass gear do you use?
I play Fodera basses and strings, and I also use Reunion Blues gigbags, Moody straps, Aguilar amps and pedals, and Bartolini pickups. It's a privilege to be endorsed by so many great companies.

"I want to play this bass for the rest of my life."

How did you first come to play a Fodera?
I remember when I was in college, in my first semester, I saw Victor Wooten play a concert. The next day, someone in my ear-training class was carrying around his bass, and he said, 'Hey Kristin, do you want to see the type of bass that Victor plays?' and he pulled out a Fodera and handed it to me. I remember I just played one note, and I could feel how amazing that instrument was. I immediately thought, 'This is the bass that I want to play for the rest of my life'. I love the Fodera team, because I grew up in San Francisco, and living in New York is rough. It's a crazy city. They are always there for me, as an artist and a friend. Vinny, Joey, and Laura are family.

> **"I'll tell baggage handlers, 'This is a $20,000 bass and I'm not throwing it under your plane!'"**

Talk to us about your Fodera bass.
It has a buckeye burl top, a birdseye maple fretboard, an ash body and alder tone block. I went in and hand-picked every piece of wood. It took four hours, and I had them climb up into the special wood section and we would sit there and tap the woods and hear the different tones. I learned so much about bass that day, just through that process. It was almost like creating a meal, where you want certain spices to go with certain foods. If you put the wrong spice in there, it can ruin it.

What kind of sound are you looking for?
It depends on the genre. If I'm playing funk music, I want something brighter, and if it's an R&B tune, I want it a little bit smoother and darker. My bass is versatile and it can provide me with everything, which is fantastic.

Do you trust airline baggage handlers with your Fodera?
No, I never hand it off to them. I will argue to the bone. I will jump on another plane if I have to. If they say, 'You have to check it', I'll just pull it out of the bag and show them what it is. I'll tell them 'This is a $20,000 bass, and I'm not throwing it under your plane. Do you have room in the coat closet?' They usually say, 'Oh my God. Yes!'

What is good bass playing, as you see it?
The short answer is 'Anything by Anthony Jackson', but you know, there's so much to the instrument. Ask yourself, 'Did you make the crowd dance? Did you support the vocalist? Did you lock in with your drummer?' I don't think there's ever a finish line. You can always learn more about bass, and you can always grow as a player. There's definitely a lot to be said for technique, but it's something that really needs a lot of focus and practice.

So what's next for you?
I have a new album on the way, which will come out next year. It's jazz-fusion, progressive-rock stuff. I'm also going to build a second instrument with Fodera. My dad gave me two huge planks of birdseye maple from the Seventies that he was going to build a table with some day, and never did, so I'm going to use that wood to build another bass. I'm really excited about that.

I also have a new teaching website on the way, www.thebasslesson.com. It focuses on online bass courses, music theory, and entrepreneurship. This site will launch in 2022. I believe musicians should not only educate themselves in their craft, but also on the business side of things. I would like to share the insights that I have to push musicians further in their career. I look forward to having featured guests on the site as well, and to provide a chat room for bass players to increase the sense of community.

Any advice for our readers?
Use technology to grow your brand. There are no limits with technology. There are avenues you can use with tech that can open new doors for you as a musician. Keep learning!

Info: www.kristinbidwell.com

SPECIAL ORDER

Ska legends the Specials return with a triumphant new album, *Protest Songs 1924-2012*. The great **Horace Panter** reveals its troubled genesis

Interview: Neil Kulkarni
Photography: Getty

"I'm just after one sound, and I stick with one bass."

Ollie Millington/Redferns via Getty

"We realized we were in danger of becoming the Best Specials Tribute Band In The World," chuckles Horace Panter, "and that's something none of us are interested in becoming. The time was right, and oddly, the pandemic gave us, as it did many people, a chance for a rethink."

We're sitting with our morning coffees in a freshly-gentrified quarter of Birmingham, where the Specials are playing tonight, and we're talking about how one of the UK's most emblematically political bands has found a whole new lease of life. In March 2020, the Specials convened for what they thought would be the recording of a new album. The pandemic put paid to those plans, but oddly, it also gave the group—now pared down after the sad passing of drummer John Bradbury in 2015 to three of the original members, vocalists Terry Hall and Lynval Golding alongside Panter—a fresh sense of purpose.

"Our last album, *Encore*, was really well received, and was very successful," recalls Panter. "The record company took up the option and said 'How about you do another one?' We thought about it and thought, 'Well, let's do a reggae record', so we got together and played some songs, just to see what this iteration of the band sounded like. But then Nikolaj Torp Larsen, our keyboard player, and Lynval came down with this kind of flu thing in early February—and three weeks later, hey, whoa, pandemic! Lynval goes back to Seattle, Terry's stuck in his house down in London, I'm stuck up in the Midlands—and that's the end of that."

> "The Black Lives Matter protest particularly affected and inspired us"

As with so many musicians, Covid didn't just play havoc with the Specials' ability to play collaboratively, it also ruined the individual artists' normal working methods.

"Absolutely," nods Panter. "Terry is the main lyricist, and he can't write at home: He needs a physical separation from his home to work. He can't write in his back bedroom or the garden, so for him and for all of us, the pandemic really spelled the end of our creative process. But of course, as the lockdown kept getting longer, we were all thinking, 'What else can we do?'"

He adds: "Lynval said, 'Let's do a covers album—an album of protest songs'. 2020 became the year of protests: The Black Lives Matter protests particularly affected and inspired us. The hardest part of the record was choosing the songs, which we did in the

"It's just a matter of putting your fingers in the right place."

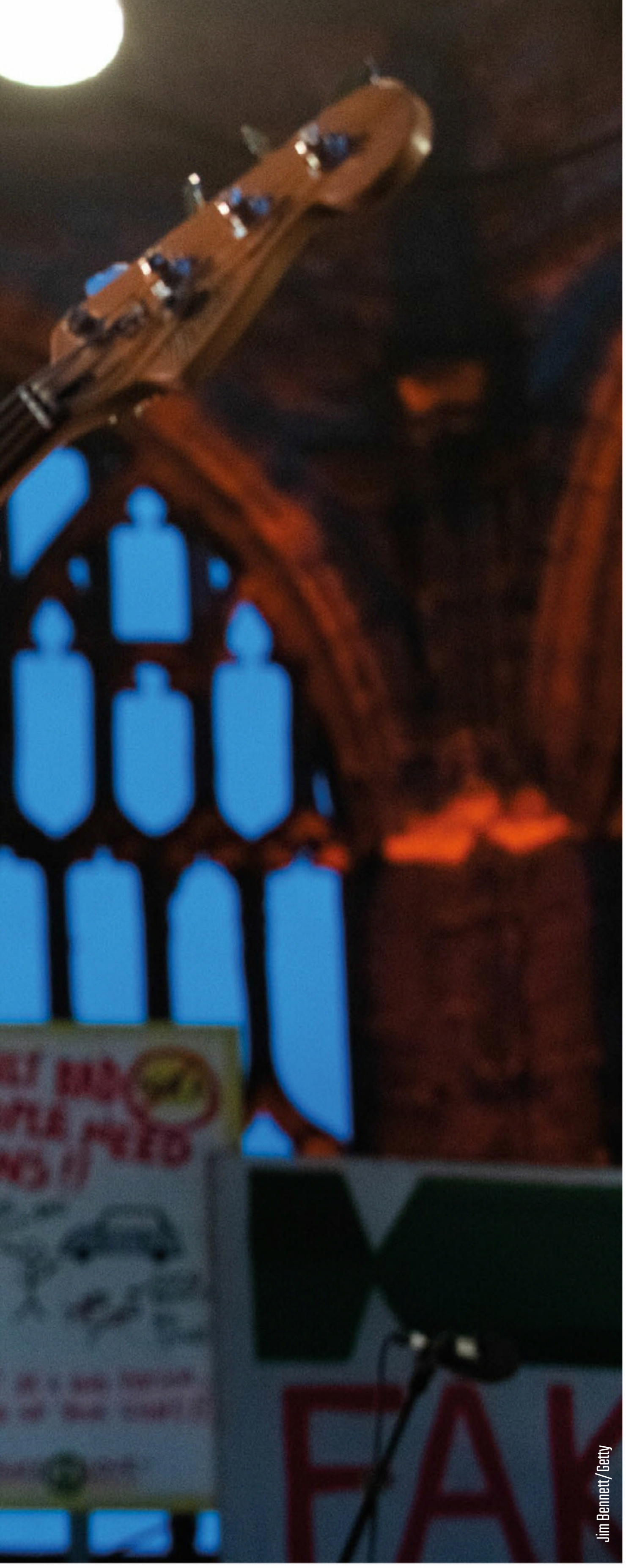
first lockdown, and once the second lockdown was over it was like, 'Quick, let's get in a studio and do it!'"

Protest Songs 1924-2012 is a stunning return for the Specials, a reminder of the band's political edge and of their maturing skills. It also captures just what a smoking-hot band they've become after a decade of reunited touring. Was the process of deciding which songs to do democratic, or a battle?

"We're old enough to be able to sit down and talk," he chuckles. "We started off with a list of 50 songs, and narrowed it down to 12. We all had personal choices that we really wanted to do: For me, those were two Talking Heads songs and a Frank Zappa song, 'Trouble Every Day'. His debut album *Freak Out!* was the first LP I ever bought. It looked at me from the shelves of my local record store in 1966. I would have been 14 or 15, and here was this sleeve with a photo of these very dangerous men. I've always thought that song, written in response to the 1965 Watts riots, sounded like it could have been written a couple of months ago. It could soundtrack riots in Portland or Seattle right now."

Some of the other cuts were unexpected to say the least. "The song 'Fuck All The Perfect People' blew us all away," says Panter. "Apart from Terry, none of us had heard it before. It was written by Chip Taylor—the actor Jon Voight's brother—who also wrote 'Wild Thing'. He wrote it after visiting a prison in Norway, and it's written from the point of view of those prisoners he met. It's a fabulous song, and so simple. With many of these songs you don't think 'How can we improve this?', it's more about preserving that basic kind of instrumentation. With Talking Heads' 'Listening Wind'—another of my choices—me and John Bradbury had

"I'm very dubious of bassists who change bass for every song. I always want to avoid wasting time and to keep things simple"



Jim Bennett/Getty

The Specials in London in 1980.

David Corio/Redferns/Getty

always wanted to explore the idea of doing that song but adding roots reggae drums to it, making it even more like 'world music'. So in a way, it was a little bit of a tip of the hat to Brad."

Once the songs were decided, the album came together uncharacteristically smoothly, he explains. "Our original plan was to do it like a campfire thing—more or less acoustically, just one mic, and everybody in the same room with minimal overdubs. We wanted that kind of old-school analogue warmth, so the songs were basically arranged more or less on the day of recording. We did a couple of run-throughs and then it was 'Okay—press record!' It was recorded to tape, right on the desk that Bob Marley mixed his *Exodus* album on, so it was really hot. The speed we got the album together reflected our togetherness, and also just how good it was to be back in a room, making music together."

Asked about his history as a bass player, Panter explains: "In groups in the Sixties, the clever bloke could play lead guitar. His best mate was taught to play rhythm, and then there was always the guy who really wanted to play guitar, but wasn't very good at it—so he ended up playing the bass. I watched the Searchers on *Thank Your Lucky Stars* in 1963, and I thought their bassist Tony Jackson looked so cool. That was it for me. I already had an acoustic guitar that I couldn't play, but then I bought a bass and learned to play it, vaguely. It wasn't until I moved to Coventry and met a guy who could really play the drums, and moved in with a keyboard player, that I realized I wanted to get good. I paid my dues in a college band, playing 'Knock Three Times' and 'I Saw Her Standing There' in innumerable working men's clubs up north, and then in 1977 [Specials keyboard player] Jerry Dammers asked me if I wanted to be in the band he was putting together. It all grew from there."

As for bass gear, Panter is in celebratory mood. "I've finally got myself an endorsement deal here!" he enthuses. "I'm an old age pensioner, but Fender finally gave me a couple of very nice Professional II Jazz basses. I'm using the maple-neck one tonight. My amplification is by Blackstar, and for little side gigs I've got an Ashdown 1x15 cab and a Fender amp that cost me 80 quid—I've been using that for 20 years. I've gone through those overly complex amps with 12-band graphic equalizers, but I'd never do anything with them. For the bass, I'm just after one sound—and I always stick with one bass all night. I'm very dubious of bassists who change bass for every song. I'm always looking to avoid wasting time and to keep things simple."

What advice would Panter give to any of our readers who are just starting out on bass? "When I was 14, I knew a kid who knew about playing bass, and I asked him 'What do you do?' He looked down his nose at me and said 'It's just a matter of putting your fingers in the right place'. I slunk away, considerably chastened, but in retrospect he was right. Also, buy a good coat. They're great for folding up and putting inside the bass drum, as well as coming in handy when the van breaks down at half past three in the morning when you're 50 miles from home and it's November. Crucially, do what you have to do. When you start off, you always want to be some kind of virtuosic jackass, the King Of Bass. Then you realize that you never will be, so you either give up, or you think 'What else can I do?' and you start listening to other people."

"You realize that Donald 'Duck' Dunn didn't actually play a great deal, but what he did play damn well made you dance. The first bass player I seriously studied was Andy Fraser from Free. A lot of his playing was so simple. You listen to 'I'll Be Creeping' and how simple his playing is… and you think 'What else do you need?'"

***Protest Songs 1924-2012* is out now.**
Info: www.facebook.com/thespecials

OHIO PLAYER

Burnt Sugar's **Jared Michael Nickerson** continues the grand funk tradition... without fingers or pick

Interview: Kevin Johnson

Burnt Sugar—whose full title is Burnt Sugar, The Arkestra Chamber—makes music like you've never heard before. In fact, they've never really heard it, either: This highly improvisatory and eclectic group creates new pieces every performance via a special hand-signal conducting system.

The collective is co-led by groove-guru bassist Jared Michael Nickerson, whose musical background spans funk, rock, pop, and more. His upbringing in Dayton, Ohio informs that span of genres, and in turn his stylistic choices in Burnt Sugar. Nickerson and the band recently released a new album, *Angels Over Oakanda*, so we hit him with some burning questions.

How does *Angels Over Oakanda* differ from Burnt Sugar's other albums?
It could probably be linked right up to the first four records as far as its spirit, but it's pandemic-related. When the bottom fell out of the industry last year, we started to go back into our unreleased catalogue. Our founder, Greg Tate, found a session from 2018 that had a 23-minute jam that was based off a loop. We shared the original track around to different members to fill out and reimagine the parts. Ultimately, it's a digital collaboration from around the world of five or six really incredible musical artists of the Burnt Sugar family that brings us back to our conducted roots. Rather than being physically conducted, they were digitally conducted through the recording process from that 23-minute session.

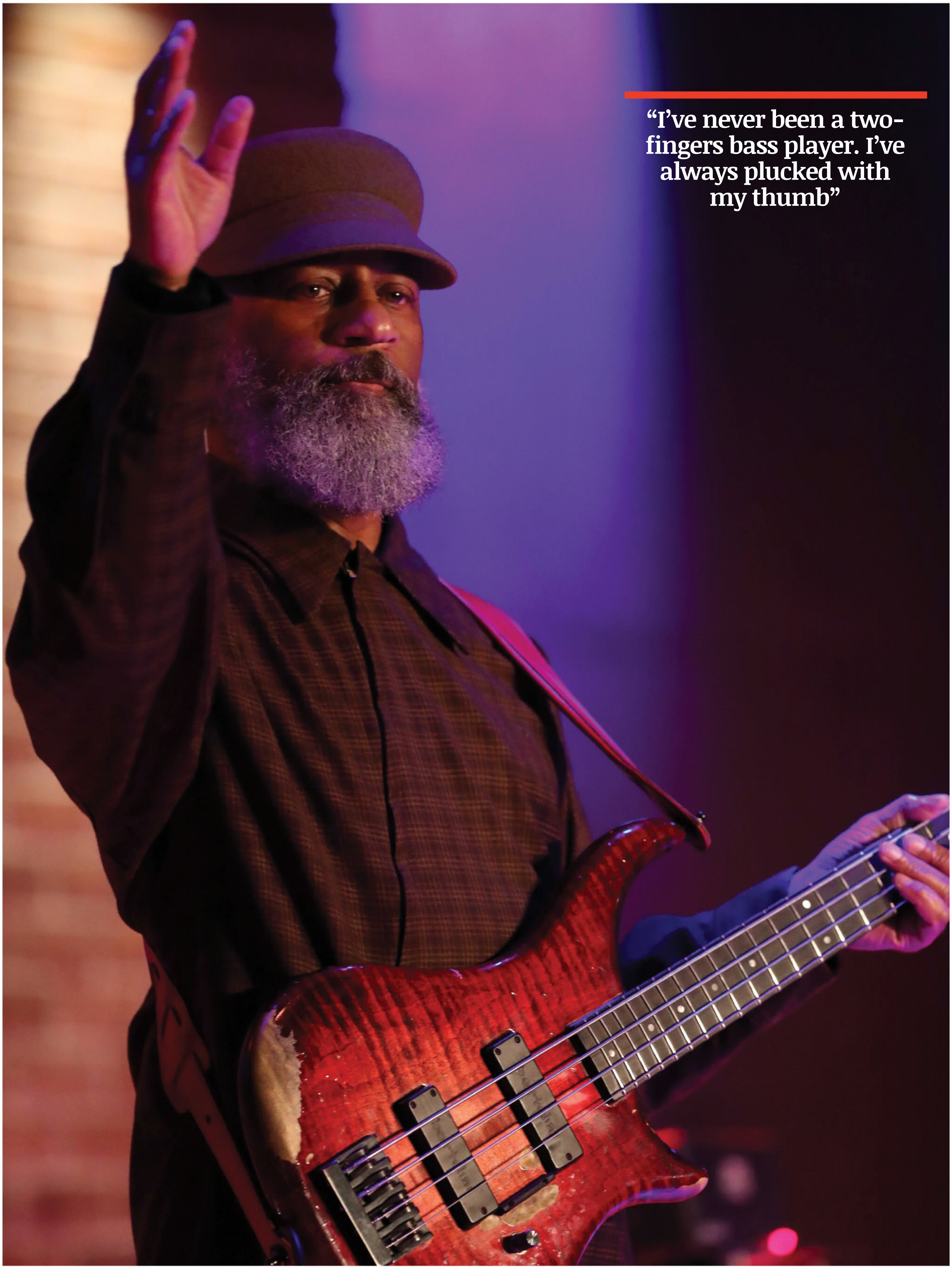
There's a flurry of notes in your bass-line for 'Oakanda Overdrive' that seems like a new technique compared for you.
Well, I've never been a two-fingers bass player: I've always plucked with my thumb. My first bass was a Harmony that had a tug bar under the G string, which just reinforced that style. Most of my recording career is based on plucking with my thumb: Freedy Johnston's *Can You Fly* [1992], Charlie Musselwhite's *Sanctuary* [2004], Gary Lucas's *Gods And Monsters* [1992]. You know, there are limitations to it. There's a lot of speed things I can't do, but I never really worried about that because I realized that it would give me something that was mine. Over the last 10 years, though, I've expanded on that, and have gone to more of a banjo style where I use the thumb and two fingers and get into a picking style like a banjo roll.

What gear are you running these days?
I used to love heavy gear, but now everything is DIY and the days of lugging that gear aren't around for me any longer. For amps, I use an Eich T900, which weighs like eight pounds. That goes into my Schroeder bass cabinets, which weigh 23 pounds. Years ago, I was introduced to Michael Pedulla and I bought one of his Thunderbasses, which was the 124th bass he ever made. That's basically that's what I play to this day. Effects-wise, I use an Electro-Harmonix White Finger Flanger and a Boss Dynamic Filter. For strings, I'm a flatwound person and I use La Bella Deep Talking Flats.

© Randy Lu

Music has taken you around the world, but it all started in the musical hotbed of Ohio in the Seventies. Can you paint that picture for us?
What people don't realize about Ohio is that the northern part, like Cleveland, is industrial and hard scrabble. You go to southern Ohio, though, and Southern sensibilities are really engrained in people. I was born in Cleveland, and moved to Dayton as a child. Dayton had most of the linchpins that Southern communities had, including a strong church system, so there were a lot of kids that would play in church. Dayton produced the Ohio Players, Zapp & Roger, and the McCoys, who did 'Hang On Sloopy' in 1965. The city has a rock history, too, which I became more involved in when I came back from Boston in the Eighties and joined the Cleveland band Human Switchboard. So there was always good local music, and dance was always important in my family. The radio was a vital component to my musical upbringing, as well. I remember when I was in the seventh grade, I was in our rec room and the station played 'Sugar Pie, Honey Bunch' by the Four Tops, followed by 'Somebody to Love' by Jefferson Airplane, and I danced through both of them. It didn't hit me until later that they both have driving bass and drums.

***Angels Over Oakanda* is out now.**
Info: www.burntsugarindex.com



"I've never been a two-fingers bass player. I've always plucked with my thumb"

© Al Pereira/Getty

PRIZE PLAYER

As the former Black Flag bassist **Kira Roessler** releases her first solo album, we find out how a hardcore punk rocker ends up working on *Game Of Thrones* and bagging a shelf-load of Emmy awards

Interview: Joel McIver **Photography**: Jack Grisham, Getty

You'll have heard of Black Flag, the hardcore punk band who formed in 1976 and are still going today, although there have been many breaks in their activity. Their most renowned line-up, and also their most prolific, consisted in the mid-Eighties of Henry Rollins (vocals), Greg Ginn (guitar), Kira Roessler (bass), and Bill Stevenson (drums), who made an enduring cult impact with releases such as *Family Man* and *Slip It In* (both 1984).

Roessler parted ways with Black Flag in 1985 and formed a two-bass band, Dos, with her then-husband Mike Watt of the Minutemen. The duo continue to operate sporadically, but her main focus as a career these days is as a dialogue and sound editor on a number of TV and film productions. Two of these have been rewarded with Emmy awards, and she was also part of the Oscar-winning team behind 2016's *Mad Max: Fury Road*.

Between her film commitments, Roessler has found time to record a solo album, *Kira*, with her brother Paul as producer. It's a dark, minimalist set of songs, focused on slick, droned bass parts, and sparse textures, and quite brilliant. It's an honor for us to spend time talking to her.

Tell us about your new album, Kira.

I've been writing the songs for years, and my brother Paul at the Kitten Robot studio would polish them, but it was never my intention to release them out into the world. When Kitten Robot started a record label, he told me that they wanted to put out this solo record. For whatever reason, it felt right: I'm 60 this year, so it felt interesting to release my first solo record now, even though it's been years and years in the making, and was never necessarily intended to be put on display and criticized.

I love the unhurried vibes of the music.

I appreciate that, thank you. I think that's part of what drives me—to express emotions by leaving spaces in the music. The tranquillity of it is the only way I know how to make myself feel it. I hope others can feel what I'm trying to express. The mood was probably very affected by the fact that I create this stuff alone in my room: It's not collaborative in the sense of some rock band playing in a garage. It's a very quiet, almost lonely exercise in expressing myself.

> "During the first Black Flag tour, at the end of every gig I'd have my hand in an ice bucket"

Did you write the songs on bass?

Yes. I've been playing bass longer than I've been a woman, you know, so it's an extension of me, and I don't feel limited by it at all. Generally, the process is that I have some sort of word or phrase or feeling that I want to write about, and then I pick up the bass and I use it to start to musically say what I'm trying to say, usually before there are words.

What inspired you to record the songs?

Right after I got kicked out of Black Flag in 1985, I was moving to New Haven, Connecticut to work at my first computer job. My brother's kids were very young at the time, and I was afraid that they were going to forget me, so I started recording these bedtime stories, just with my voice and bass, because I thought that was a soothing combination. I would try to interpret the story and capture its emotion in the bass-lines. These were some of my earliest explorations in recording just for the love of doing it. I went from Dr. Seuss songs when they were very young, all the way to Edgar Allan Poe as they got older. I tried to get more sophisticated as I went along, and my nephews probably stopped listening to them, but it was a writing challenge that I really enjoyed. Some of those songs became the new ones on the record. At any given moment, I have 20 songs in some state of completion and process, whether it's just an idea for a bass-line to being somewhat complete. As to whether anybody else hears it, that's a whole separate exercise.

Do you arrange the songs before you record them?

No, I'm not someone who imagines whole songs in my head. What I generally do is sit down in front of Pro-Tools with my bass and I start to record things. Sometimes it's just a single part, because I've learned to make use of occasional free half-hours: I'll write a piece of a song and then go away and come back to it and enhance it. This is partly why the album has taken so long, because I generally work a day job as well, so I have to make use of small chunks of time and build on things. Once there's a bass part forming the structure of a song, then I'll either work on a second bass-line, or I'll imagine some sort of melody and sing it. But this is very much bass music written and sung by a bass player, not a singer.

Will you tour the new album?

That's a very interesting question, and one that I've been asked more often than I thought I would be. I can say that I will not be going on tour. That's not really on the cards for me. I do miss playing live, even though I haven't done it in some years, so the answer is that I'm trying to explore a way to create an event. It's in its infancy, but I'm hoping to make it happen. It's not going to be a traditional thing. It won't be what people expect.

So, no tourbus for you?

No, I don't miss that part. I miss playing for people, of course, but the thing about touring is that the live show is a very small part of each day.

“I’m 60 this year, so it felt interesting to release my first solo album now.”

© Jack Grisham

What was the gear you used on the record?
I have a custom bass that I've played for the last 15 years. I got it after Mike Watt and I were on a little Canadian tour with our band Dos, and my pinky started failing. I was playing my Rickenbacker and my pinky finger was not co-operating by the third or fourth show in a row. Mike said to me, 'Look, it's time you went to a three quarter-scale bass'. There's a luthier named Mark Garza, who makes a custom Garz bass for Mike, and he made me a bass that looks like a Rickenbacker but with the headstock from a Telecaster. It is not like any other guitar: It's electric blue, and it's a beautiful bass. Unfortunately, it was stolen out of my house, along with some other stuff.

That's terrible.
Yeah. I basically collapsed into a little puddle when that happened, but then I called Mark Garza and he made me another bass, a blonde one. Luckily, I had a very kind friend who contacted the head of security at Universal Studios on my behalf. He was a former cop, and he knew what to do, so he got a picture of my bass and sent it to guitar shops all over the place, thinking that someone might bring it in and try to sell it. Sure enough, 10 days after my bass was stolen, some guy showed up with it at a shop. Because it's such an unusual bass, the guy at the shop recognized it, and said to the thief, 'I have to take a picture of your driver's licence'—and the guy took off, leaving the bass! So I got it back, which I know is a rare story.

How did you get into bass in the first place?
My love for bass goes all the way back to my childhood. I started on piano when I was six, but I quit out of frustration from competing with my older brother and never being as good as him. He was really into Emerson, Lake & Palmer and Jethro Tull and bands like that, and he had written a 40-minute progressive rock opera. The bass player in his band quit, and suddenly a light went on for me, and I thought 'I don't have to compete with him—I can play a different instrument and join his band'. So I bought a bass from one of the guys in that band ,and started practicing after school, every day, and at weekends. I was never good enough to join that progressive rock band, though, and I wasn't that into prog anyway. I was listening to David Bowie and the Rolling Stones, so in hindsight, I'm surprised that I even wanted to join that band. Anyway, Paul got into punk rock, and that wasn't quite as difficult, so I joined his punk rock band. Again, I was just the kid sister following along. I fell into it, really, just because there was a vacancy in a band.

You played a Rickenbacker at first.
The only reason I started playing on a Rickenbacker was because the guy in the band handed me one, but it turned out to be the right choice, because my hand isn't particularly large, and I liked the neck being a little thinner than a Fender. I wasn't particularly drawn to the sound of the Rickenbacker, so I started replacing the electronics and the bridge. Again, I just fell into playing that bass. My whole life has been like that. I fell into my career completely accidentally. I tend to jump into the opportunities that are thrown at me.

Was the rebellion of punk rock attractive?
Of course. My tendency was to be a tomboy and a nonconformist, never really feeling like I fit in. Punk rock felt right because it was a bunch of misfits: a bunch of people who just didn't fit with society's norms in terms of music and in terms of how we looked, so that was appealing, and it felt right to me.

If you listen back to your work with Black Flag, how do the bass parts sound to you?
I was not particularly creative. What they were asking me to do was hold down the basic structure of the songs, so that's what I did. At the time, that was more of a physical challenge than a creative challenge for me. In terms of how the bass actually sounds, I think I captured a certain amount of power. That was an education for me, because I don't think I understood how physical an instrument the bass guitar is until I was in Black Flag. Having that additional strength and power, and not being limited by my hands or my brain, was wonderful. It opened things up for me. I don't necessarily put a Black Flag record on and listen to it, but if someone posts a live clip, I might click on the link, because I'm always curious if the sound is any good. Once in a while, there's something that sounds kind of good, and I watch myself attacking the bass, and my neck starts hurting just looking at it.

"Bass is my life."

What were the challenges for you in Black Flag?
Most of the time I was at my absolute physical limit, you know. The first week I was in the band, I did something to the tendon in my picking hand and went to the emergency room. They put me in a splint and said, 'Don't play for six weeks'. I was like, 'But I just joined a punk rock band!', and four days later, I was playing again. During the first tour, you would have found me at the end of every gig with my hand in an ice bucket.

Ouch. Did your hand get stronger?
No, my right hand was always a bit of a limitation. I did dig a hole in my Rickenbacker, just from playing really hard with my middle finger on the E string—I think that's kind of cool. But I never felt that my hand got stronger. I think the muscle structures there are what you're stuck with, it's not like other muscles that can grow. I was able to hold my end up, though—I was able to do it. They never seemed to feel that I was the weak link, and when they asked me to leave in 1985, I don't think it had anything to do with my bass playing.

So why did they ask you to leave?
Bands are like marriages of several people, you know, and just like marriages, it's amazing when a band stays together for any amount of time. You all have to be so in sync with what you're trying to achieve, and where you are in your life, and often the personalities work for a while and then there's a shift. People change and grow, or you're on tour and exhausted, and you express one too many complaints about your discomfort. They just didn't want to play with me any more, but I don't think it was my playing that did it.

Presumably Dos was a more enjoyable exercise.
Dos too was a marriage, in more ways than one. It was often like a battle, but the cool thing about that is that the battle comes across musically as something that works. It's funny, when people ask about my influences, to me it's usually about who's challenging me, so when Mike and I created this two-bass band Dos, we were in the same frequency range, which was therefore somewhat of a battle for space. The songwriting was really about how to intertwine these two instruments and find the spaces and the holes in the music.

"The wings on my Emmys would make an excellent potential weapon!"

How did you and Mike approach that?
We felt very strongly that there wasn't going to be a melody and a bass-line, you know, with one of us at the bottom and one of us at the top. It was never going to be like that, so that challenged me to write first and second bass-lines for a given Dos song. I learned a lot about how to try and enhance a song without stepping on Mike, who is a very expressive bass player. Because of what we were doing with bass, even when our marriage stopped working I always felt like the music gave us a structure to continue having a kind of relationship when we couldn't live together any more. A lot of that was driven by our love for the bass guitar, truly.

Back in Black Flag.
© Gary Leonard/Corbis via Getty Images

Which bass players influenced you?
I admire a bass player when they're doing what's right for the music. Paul McCartney was right for his music. Dusty Hill was perfect for his music, you know. I'm not impressed by someone who's more interested in showing me their skill than in doing what works for the music: I don't need to hear how many notes you can play. On my record, I think the holes and the spaces in the music are as expressive as the notes.

You also have a project with Devin Hoff.
I do. Devin is a double bass player and he plays some bass guitar as well. We have a little project that we call Awkward, and have an EP on Bandcamp. We send music back and forth.

What does your day usually look like?
I get up, I walk and feed the dogs, and then I work. It depends whether I'm working at home or at a studio. I work from project to project, so there are sometimes spaces in between where I can do a little more music. I can't do that if I'm in the midst of a project where my time is being sucked into a movie or a show.

What is your job title?
Generally speaking, I'm a sound editor, but sometimes I'm a dialogue editor or supervisor. The roles change depending on the project. I also work in ADR, which is automatic dialogue replacement when there's something in a dialogue that isn't working. Loosely speaking, the task is to make people's mouths move and have the right sounds come out, as well as solving the problems of the sound that they record on the set, and trying to solve as many of those problems as you can before the mix is done.

Is this hard work?
If I'm on a project, it's a 10-hour day, minimum. We're basically on a 50-hour week by union arrangement, and then there's overtime and weekends too, at different times during the project. That's part of why I have to make my free half-hours count. When I work on music, it's usually before work. I'm an early morning person, so I can record stuff early in the morning and send stuff to someone else.

What do you do in your downtime?
I'm very into taking care of myself and exercising, so I like to power-walk most days, or I'll do some laps at a local pool. I'm a homebody, though. I don't go to see gigs very much—it has to be something that I really want to see. It's a big deal to get me out to a club to hear music, and some of that is because I'm very protective of my ears. I rely on them for work and for my joy of music. My husband is retired and is very busy playing golf most days. Things are generally pretty quiet around here.

Tell me you've got your Emmys proudly on display somewhere?
I have my two Emmys in the front hallway on a little shelf. They are somewhat on display. What's cool about the Emmys is that they have these wings, or prongs, that would make an excellent potential weapon if someone were to come in my front door that I didn't want to have come in.

That's a very punk-rock way of looking at it. Thank you for the interview, Kira.
It's been a pleasure. I really appreciate getting to do this. Of course I'm a huge fan of *Bass Player* magazine. Bass is my life, so doing this is a big honor.

Kira is out now.
Info: https://kittenrobot.com

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FAITH HEALER

Faith No More bassist **Bill Gould** may not be back on the road as soon as he'd like, but he still has tons of bass wisdom to share...

Interview: Ellen O'Reilly

Back in September, the alternative-rock stalwarts Faith No More were forced to cancel a string of live shows alongside System Of A Down due to the mental health struggles of FNM singer Mike Patton. Supporting their comrade through his issue, the other band-members—Jon Hudson (guitar), Mike Bordin (drums), Roddy Bottum (keyboards), and our long-time friend, Bill Gould (bass)—have kept busy with other projects.

Gould, a record-label owner, occasional guest bassist with projects such as the astonishing MC50 project a couple of years back, and also importer into the USA of the Yebiga Prva rakija spirit, has called to tell us what's been happening lately. For starters, he fills us in on his ongoing battle to rebuild his flooded studio in Oakland, CA, where FNM recorded their last studio album *Sol Invictus* in 2015.

"It used to be our rehearsal studio, but I just kept collecting equipment, and it grew into a full studio," he tells me. "I built it six years ago, but it got flooded, and it's taken six months to nearly get it operational again. It's based way below sea level, so if it rains really hard, you can get flooding."

The MC50 tour is a much more positive topic for conversation. This all-star band, based around the MC5's Wayne Kramer, toured extensively back in 2018. Gould's unique bass sound lent itself perfectly to the punk vibes of MC5, yet as a Faith No More fan, I couldn't help but hear funk in his style. Where did he get that sound, I wonder?

> **"I don't want to sound delicate... I need the impact!"**

"I never set out to be a funk player, but I guess growing up in Los Angeles had that effect on our music," he explains. "There were quite a lot of funk bands and influences around in the environment, and I guess they crept in. I remember the time I first saw the Red Hot Chili Peppers, who grew up in the same area. I know Flea has different influences to me, but the LA funk and punk rock vibe was also there."

How did he find his way towards bass? "I started playing bass at around 12 or 13 years old," he says, "and everyone else was a drummer or guitarist, and they needed a bass player. I started playing in the Seventies when everything was leaning more towards prog rock—bands like Gentle Giant, Genesis, Yes, and King Crimson—so it was all about that more virtuoso style of playing. When I

Suhaimi Abdullah/Getty

A neck workout with the MC50 in 2018

heard the Sex Pistols, that just changed everything. It became less about virtuosity and more about conveying a feeling and emotion. I'm into guys like JJ Burnel, Lemmy, and Jah Wobble. I learned to play by writing songs. To me, it's more about feeling and passion than technical playing."

Gould has been a long-time Zon player, with his own signature models, the Sonus BG4 and BG5. These have his custom circuit built in, he explains. "I've been playing Zon basses since 1992, and when I'm on the road I'll have two the exact same. I'm not massively into pedals, and I wanted to have my tone already there in my bass, so I got the Zon guys to build in a circuit where the EQ is accessible through the back plate."

It's a custom designed preamp by Roy Zichri of Greenhouse Effects, with a touch-sensitive on-board distortion circuit. "The bass just has a volume knob and a distortion switch, and it has a graphite neck, so it feels the same all the time—

"The sound of my bass is in my hands. I don't get hung up on gear and preamps—for me, it's about what you do with it"

it doesn't matter how hot or how cold it gets," he adds. "The preamp provides the grunt, but I sometimes use an Ibanez Tube Screamer for grit. I also use a Darkglass 900 through Ampeg SVT cabs. I have Dunlop strings on my Zon—they're great people who have looked after me for years."

Apart from the gear side of things, what is it about Gould's playing that makes him sound like him? "The sound of my bass is in my hands, I don't get hung up on gear and preamps—for me it's about what you do with it. Music is like cooking: You add your own flavor and try things out until it tastes good, right? I'm into everything and all kinds of music. It's like being a chef and experimenting with flavors and every kind of ingredient."

What are his favorite FNM bass-lines, we want to know? "Aw man, that's a tough question—but I'd have to say 'Epic' (1990) is up there, which is just as well, as it's a song I'll have to play live for the rest of my natural life! I also love playing 'Separation Anxiety' from the *Sol Invictus* album, which has this circular, almost drummer-like style to it—an almost hypnotic rhythm which is great to play live. 'We Care A Lot' has that tight slap part, then there's 'The Gentle Art Of Making Enemies' which is a real workout—it's all this really aggressive downpicking. I love playing 'Kindergarten', too, because it's a lot of bass chords with distortion. I really like playing chords, especially with distortion—it's something Lemmy used to do brilliantly. I don't want to sound delicate… I need impact!"

Faith No More: www.fnm.com
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Applying thumb to signature Zon: Note single volume knob

Chris McKay/Getty

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ALLEY CAT

Does The Cure's 'The Love Cats' have the most memorable bass part of the Eighties? We ask its creator, **Phil Thornalley**

Interview: Ellen O'Reilly **Photography**: Getty

Phil Thornalley, songwriter and bass player, laughs as he recalls the creation of a certain iconic bass part. Back in 1983, he was producing the British band The Cure when their long-time bass player Simon Gallup stepped away from the band for a while. In Gallup's absence, a single called 'The Love Cats' was given an unusual bass part.

"Robert Smith, the Cure's singer, had shown me the principal bass-line when we were on tour, and I'd learned it on electric bass. When we got to the studio to record it, I saw this double bass—and Robert said to me, 'You've gotta play that!' I had to get a tuner out and put some marks on the bass neck, because I had no idea where the notes were. When we started recording, I took the basic bass-line and, as the song progressed, I moved the line around for the chords. I also did a faux walking bass-line at one point. Because of my limitations on double bass, I couldn't play the whole part in one take, so I played each part over two tracks. I'm doing half of the line on one track, and the other half on the other."

Although the single, released in 1983, was a hit, Thornalley cringes when he thinks what double bass professionals would have made of his bass part. "I'm sure jazz players feel like crying whenever they hear that line. In terms of spirit it's right on, but in terms of technique and choice of notes, I'm flying by the seat of my pants. I've never played a double bass again since then. I was in The Cure for 18 months, and at the very last show I played with them in New York, I decided to throw in this disco run... which was totally inappropriate."

Thornalley's new album, a self-titled release under the name Astral Drive, conjures the spirit of Todd Rundgren in its throwaway, Seventies-style approach to rock.

"I think of myself more as a bass manipulator," he tells us. "I have no chops. You see videos on YouTube of people playing incredibly accurate and technical stuff with beautiful tones, and I have no idea how to do that, but I can play what you need for a record or a song—and more importantly, respect the singer."

Make no mistake, though—he's still a huge fan of bass. "I've gotta tell you, I've been set up with so many interviews and podcasts, but this is the one I was most excited about because now I get my chance to talk about bass guitar," he says. "I was 13 when I picked up the guitar. We had a band in the little village where I lived, but we had four guitarists... and as I was the youngest and smallest, they said 'Why don't you be the bass player?'"

This is a story that *BP* readers know well—a bass being thrust upon the extra guitarist—but if we're lucky, the stars align and we end up falling in love with the low end, just as Thornalley did. "My first bass was a Hofner, but when I was about 16, I got a Fender Precision. Going from playing a light semi-acoustic bass to this enormous heavy instrument was quite something. I was just navigating though music, and teaching myself with no formal musical education. I had the best influences, though: You can't talk about bass guitar without talking about James Jamerson. He was the complete opposite of everything that anybody ever teaches you about playing bass—things like 'Stick to a simple groove' and 'Don't get in the way

The Cure in 1984 with Phil Thornalley at far left: "I'm sure jazz bassists cry when they hear that line."

of the singer'. Jamerson was like, 'I'll play a harmony with the singer, and maybe I'll play the root, but I'm gonna run up to it with a chromatic run, switch up the rhythm and make it swing!' Nobody else could do that at the time. You hear a Motown record and you think, 'What on earth is that guy doing with the bass?'"

He adds: "I also admired a great bass player in Todd Rundgren's first band called John Siegler. He had a very groovy, very minimal style with some Jamerson moments in the fills, but the rest of the time he would keep it really simple. Those guys always had the bass mixed really loud, and in fact this is the sort of perspective you end up getting as a song producer. If you can get the bass to function, you can mix it really loud. I usually leave the bass as the last thing to produce, after everything is down."

After The Cure, Thornalley became known as a member of the pop band Johnny Hates Jazz, of which he was a member from 1988 to 1992, and later as a songwriter. Among many

> **"I'm sure jazz players feel like crying whenever they hear the 'Love Cats' bass-line, but in terms of spirit it's right on."**

other collaborations, he co-wrote, produced and played bass on the song 'Torn', a hit for European artists before the Australian singer Natalie Imbruglia made it famous in 1997; younger readers will also remember the British boy-band One Direction's version of the song in 2012.

More recently, he played bass on tour with Bryan Adams. "It's funny," he muses. "My childhood neighbor, Mike Nocito, has always been a member of Johnny Hates Jazz. He's the bass player and they've just been on tour with Level 42. We laugh about our history as bass players. He's a producer that picked up the bass because no-one else would do it; I'm a songwriter that picked up the bass because no-one else would do it. We've both come to have a long career as bass players, but not like other bass players who are into Jaco Pastorius and can read music. Mike and I just picked it up."

Thornalley's story seems to be one of being constantly thrown in at the deep end. "When I toured with Bryan Adams, I had no rehearsal," he remembers. "I turned up at an arena in 2016 with eight thousand people there, and had a run through in soundcheck—and then it was show time! You're playing with muscle memory in that situation, so when Bryan would call out a song that I didn't know, I could hear it. The key thing to remember, if you're ever in front of thousands of people and you don't know what to play, is—just don't play!"

He adds: "Fortunately, this has only ever happened to me a couple of times over the years, when Bryan would call out old songs sometimes. Personally, I find that when you play really good songs, you get an instinctive sense of what the bass guitar should be doing, like when you listen to a Motown song, and you hear the bass wandering through it, so melodic and with so much information. Somewhere in the song there will be a triad, telling you if it's major or minor or a seventh. At a really crucial moment, it will underline that tonality. Keep listening and you'll definitely get it!"

Astral Drive is out now on Lojinx. Info: www.facebook.com/astraldrive

Thornalley with his trusted 1977 P-Bass: "I'm a songwriter who picked up the bass because no-one else would do it."

Fin Costello/Redferns via Getty

18+

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Incoming

Which bassist was obsessed with the Blues Brothers? Which one couldn't switch from pick to fingers? And which one got some valuable advice from a drummer? Meet **Matteo Bassoli** of Me And That Man, Florence Black's bassist **Jordan 'Foz' Evans**, Dirty Honey's **Justin Smolian** and **Mike Jeffries** of Venom Prison...

Interviews: Hywel Davies

How did you get started on bass?
MATTEO I officially started playing bass in 2010 with a band called Donkey Breeder, a progressive band from Modena, Italy, my home town. The guys were in need of a new bassist ,and the previous one was, like me, a guitarist playing on bass, so it was my job from the beginning. I gave it a try, the guys liked me, I loved bass from the first touch and I haven't stopped since then. Thanks to Donkey Breeder's bass playing, I got a job in Blindead, and my adventure with Me And That Man started when I joined the band in 2017.

FOZ I picked up the bass for this band! Through school I messed about with other instruments, and one day Perry (drums) and Tristan (vocals/guitar) asked me to learn some songs on the bass for a jam. Nothing came of that jam until about a year later, when we played the Foo Fighters 'All My Life' for a jam night in our local social club. Once we played in front of an audience, we knew we had to start a band together.

JUSTIN I started playing bass in middle school. All of my friends were into Nirvana, and we wanted to start a band. I remember my father insisting that because I was left-handed, I should play left-handed like Paul McCartney. He also told me that if I played bass, I would always be able to work. Aside from Nirvana and the Beatles, my earliest bass heroes were Flea, John Paul Jones, and I became obsessed with 'Duck' Dunn after seeing the Blues Brothers movie.

> "After playing 'All My Life' at the local social club, we knew we had to start a band together"
> 'Foz' Evans

MIKE I started playing guitar first, and when I was about 11 I started picking up my one of my friends' basses. I tried switching over to fingers, but I'm so used to being a pick player from playing guitar.

What was your first bass guitar?
MATTEO The one that I always liked the most was the Fender Precision. I feel really comfortable with the size of the instrument, the neck, the weight and all the specs, plus in my opinion it is the best-sounding bass ever. I bought my first Precision in 2010 in Modena, at the shop of my friend Lenzotti, and it was love at first note.

FOZ My first bass was an Ibanez… just a common beginner bass.

JUSTIN My first bass was a cheap Hohner PJ that I still have to this day. I played that thing for years, basically replacing all the parts on it. Seth Lee Jones, who made my current bass, saw me playing it at a gig, and insisted that we 'Frankenstein' it. He reshaped the neck at his shop as well as replacing the bridge, pickups, nut and tuners. It's now a great bass.

MIKE My first bass was an Ibanez Soundgear, quite cheap. It was a great bass to start with, and I stuck with it for several years because it sounded so good.

What gear do you currently use?
MATTEO With Me And That Man, my main instrument is the Fender Precision bass that I mentioned, and as a backup I take out a marvelous Aria Pro 2 Primary bass from 1979: I like to switch between them. On both basses I changed the original bridge to a Gotoh 201-B4, so they both have more sustain and a heavier tone. I use an Ampeg SVT 3-Pro: I've recorded many albums with this combination of Precision and SVT, from grindcore to blues. I have four basses and three of them are Precisions: The fourth one is a Gibson

Annette Holloway

Hair we go: Justin Smolian

Les Paul Standard bass I used on the new MATM record *New Man, New Songs, Same Shit Volume 2*. It was an experiment and I'm really satisfied with the results. I also use a Sansamp Bass Driver and an MXR M80 Bass DI pedal for distortion.

FOZ I use Ampeg heads and cabs, a Gibson Thunderbird bass and four pedals: a SansAmp Bass Driver which is the secret sauce, a Boss overdrive pedal for use during solos, a Boss phaser for some intros and solos, and a tuner. I like to keep my sound as raw as possible.

JUSTIN I don't have a large collection of basses because I'm left-handed and it's hard to find instruments. I currently play an SLJ custom PJ bass which is basically a '63 Jazz neck with a '61 P body. I also have a Precision which I love, and a Gibson SG that is my first short-scale, as well as a right-handed Epiphone Jack Casady bass that I flipped around. As far as amps, I use the Aguilar AG700 head with the Aguilar SL212 cab. My pedal collection is pretty big, but my current pedalboard includes MXR, EHX, Exotic, EBS, Darkglass and Strymon effects.

MIKE I play a Jackson X Series David Ellefson five-string, not the expensive American one, the Indonesian model. It's a great bass. I've taken other, more expensive basses on tour, and this one sounds better than they did. I use an Orange AD200 MK3 amp through an Ampeg 8x10 cab, and my pedalboard includes the new Darkglass Adam.

Give us some advice about playing bass.
MATTEO When you're recording bass, don't rush. Lay back a bit and it will sound more groovy. Create your sound together with the

Mike Jeffries

other instruments. Maybe when you hear it alone it's cool, but then when the rest of the band starts playing, you disappear in the mix. Bass is the glue that holds everything together, so listen to the global sound, and adjust your EQ with your bandmates.

FOZ Less is more. You're usually only playing one note at a time, so that note is very important and you have to choose it wisely! Lock in with the drums, too, to create a nice musical blanket for the guitars to do all the fancy work.

"When recording bass, don't rush—lay back, and it will sound more groovy."
Matteo Bassoli

JUSTIN I remember an old drummer telling me that the most important thing a bassist can do is lock in with the kick drum. That really stuck with me.

MIKE When you practice, slow down. Try recording yourself, and that way you'll notice your mistakes, like if you're not muting the strings properly or whatever. Warm up with scales, and always be plugged in.

Name a great bass player.
MATTEO Geddy Lee, Les Claypool, Lemmy, John Deacon, Roger Waters, Jason Newsted, Jack Bruce, Geezer Butler, John Paul Jones, Rex Brown, Nicola Faso Fasani, Phil Lynott, and tons of funk, reggae and blues bass players that I can't even start listing because there are too many.

FOZ Some of my favourites are Justin Chancellor, Duff McKagan, Geezer Butler, Tim Commerford, and Les Claypool.

JUSTIN James Jamerson and Paul McCartney were very melodic players whose lines would really shape the overall song, as well as having amazing pockets. I spent a summer playing in a Motown cover band, and really integrated Jameson's style into my playing. As far as new players go, I think MonoNeon is the most incredible bassist I have ever heard. His sense of time and feel is from another planet.

MIKE Alex Webster from Cannibal Corpse. I read his book, *Extreme Metal Bass*, and it taught me so much.

Where can we hear you play?
MATTEO My main band is Me And That Man: You can hear me in action on both of our albums. During my career I've played and recorded many albums with many different bands. You can hear me playing bass with Donkey Breeder, Blindead,

Roberto Ricciuti/Redferns/Getty

Matteo Bassoli

Jakub Andrijewski

Tranquilizer, Proghma-C, Sunwôrm, and many other guest appearances that I don't even remember.

FOZ Our debut album *Weight Of The World* is out now. Check out the bass tone on the album: Our producer Romesh Dodangoda did an outstanding job at getting a big bass sound.

JUSTIN I'm currently out on tour with my band Dirty Honey, and you can hear me on any recording our band has released.

MIKE We just finished recording our first album for Century Media. I loved working with our producer Scott Atkins—he really tries to get the best out of you.

MATTEO ***www.meandthatman.com***
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GEAR Reviews

Welcome to our expert road-tests of state-of-the-art bass gear

Behold our world-beating bass gear review section, where we bring you the crop of each month's new, interesting, or otherwise relevant bass guitars, bass amplifiers, bass cabs, and bass effects. Occasionally we'll review a guitar effect if it's useful for bassists, but generally speaking, this zone is reserved for bass-specific gear.

We take our reviews seriously. *BP* is the last English-language print magazine devoted solely to bass in the world, and we have readers all over the planet, so we're responsible about our conclusions. If a product is worth your time, we'll say so; if it's flawed, we'll make that clear. We're not answerable to advertisers in any way, and our tests are independent of the views of musicians, manufacturers, and distributors.

When you read about a product here, you're getting a fair, balanced review from a highly experienced gear tester. Value for money is at the top of our agenda in these cash-strapped times, but on the other hand, we believe in paying for quality. Let us know what you think of our conclusions. Did we get it right?

Joel McIver, Editor

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Reviewed this month...

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GODIN GUITARS
A5 ULTRA AE
$2300 MSRP, godinguitars.com

52
HARLEY BENTON
CLB-10SE
$202, www.thomann.de

54
KUSTOM
KXB COMBOS
$429, $200 approx, www.kustom.com

56
FENDER
TRAPPER BASS DISTORTION
$169.99, www.fender.com
ASHDOWN
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$599, www.davitthanser.com

GODIN
A5 Ultra AE

GODIN GUITARS
godinguitars.com

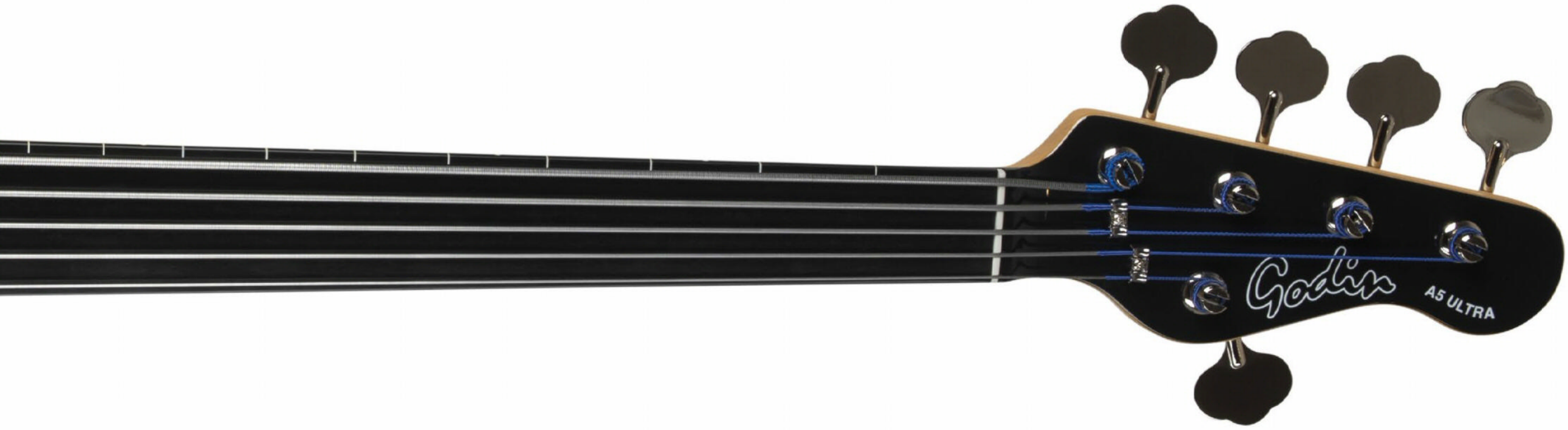
Half acoustic, half electric, two pickup options and two outputs? Our Ed is intrigued

Godin's sumptuous A4 and A5 acoustic-electric basses, the AE range, have been around for a few years: This new 2021 version has a redesigned electronics suite for bass players looking for an acoustic element to their sound.

Beautifully designed and assembled, the A5 that we've been sent for review comes with a pricetag that will make most of us wince, especially in these impoverished early months of the year—but you do get a whole lot of bass innovation for your bucks.

Build Quality

This instrument oozes a feeling of quality, from the semi-gloss finish of the body, the almost frictionless rear neck finish and the diamond-hard Richlite fretboard. It feels expensive but also innovative, partly because its construction—essentially a chunky, Precision-style neck bolted to a partly acoustic body—is genuinely unusual. We're told that there are two chambers in the body, but you'd never know that without unscrewing the preamp cover in the rear top bout. The light-ish weight of the body does make it



$2300 MSRP

feel slightly insubstantial, and there's some neck dive due to the unapologetically large dimensions of the headstock and its tuners: a smaller headstock would have made more sense for this reason. Still, you can counter this slight imbalance with ease with judicious use of the top-mounted thumb rest, which all bass guitars will have after the revolution.

The A5 is a reasonably heavy bass, coming in at 9.3 pounds, partly because there's a lot of electronics under the hood, and also because of the neck profile, which is hefty without actually approaching baseball-bat dimensions. Note that there are two output jacks, in a kind of Schrödinger's Signal situation that it took me a minute to figure out. Use the one marked Acoustic and leave the one labelled Electric alone, and you get a mix of the two pickup systems mentioned below; use them both, and they send the separate acoustic and electric signals that you'd expect.

Sounds And Playability

The ace in this bass's pack, so to speak, is its two pickup systems. One is a standard magnetic pickup, in this case a Lace Sensor unit fitted close to the bridge—presumably it's located back there to compensate as much as possible for the low end and low mids favored by the instrument. Controlled with rotary volume and tone knobs on the top bout of the bass, the pickup produces a familiar range of electric tones, from the thunderous to the treble-heavy.

The second, more elaborate system is based on LR Baggs saddle transducers in the bridge. While the press release claims that this gets you "an authentic acoustic double bass sound", I think that's a touch optimistic. What you do get, especially if you spend some time working with the three-band EQ, is a thoroughly decent quasi-acoustic tone, with a hollow thud and rasp that upright players will recognize. You can tweak the sound still further with a 'saturation' slider, which Godin have told *BP* has been designed specifically with acoustic sounds in mind, and a 'Fat switch', which adds a touch of boost in the low mids.

It's a clever system, although you may find yourself a bit frustrated by the fact that none of the eight controls on the bass are labeled.

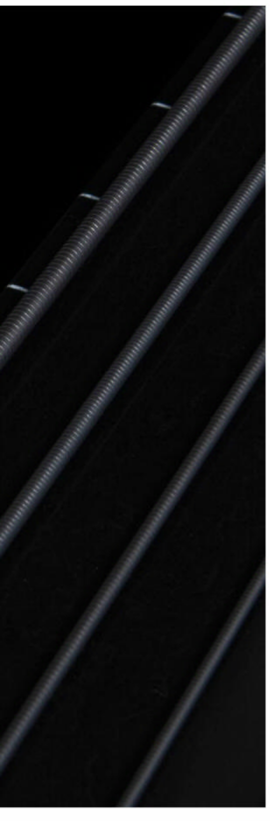
The A5 Ultra is resolutely luxurious—a high-end asset if you spend a lot of time recording

Of course, the bass looks cooler without a load of text scribbled all over it, but that will be less of a priority when it's pitch dark on stage and you inadvertently boost the volume instead of the EQ. Yes, it happens.

The playability of this bass is off the chart, assuming there is such a chart. The super-low action of our review model complements the hard fingerboard, and the effort required to play a mwah-heavy line is minimal. Thumping and plucking is doable, with the obvious caveats that flatwound strings and no frets don't exactly enable this technique. The exceptionally clear, present tones in the upper register make the A5 a soloist's dream, although you might want to deploy an external preamp if a glassy top end is what you need.

Conclusion

We spend a lot of time here at *BP* playing and writing about affordable basses that you can take on tour because it doesn't really matter if they break. This bass is the opposite of those. Big in body and tone, costly, and made of very fine materials that you really don't want to damage, it's resolutely luxurious, and delivers a very fine return for your investment. Consider the A5 a high-end asset if your music needs a reasonable approximation of an acoustic sound, or if you spend a lot of time recording.



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | $2300 MSRP
Made In | Canada
Body | Two-chambered Canadian Laurentian basswood with solid spruce top
Neck | Hard Rock Maple, 34" scale
Neck Join | Bolt-on, four bolts
Fingerboard | Richlite, Graphtech nut
Pickups | Lace Sensor magnetic pickup plus LR Baggs saddle transducers
Electronics | Custom-voiced LR Baggs preamp, electric and acoustic outputs
Controls | Volume and tone for pickup; 'Fat switch' plus volume, bass, mid, treble and saturation sliders for saddle transducers
Hardware | Chrome tuners, ebony bridge
Weight | 9.3lbs
Left-hand option available | No
Case/gigbag included | Gigbag

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Effortlessly playable
Minus | Heavy, expensive, unlabeled controls
Overall | A heavyweight bass in all senses

BP RATING

BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★★★★★★
SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★★★★★☆
VALUE
★★★★★★★★★☆

HARLEY BENTON CLB-10SE

Does cheap always equal cheerful? **Mike Brooks** finds out

THOMANN
www.thomann.de

$202

The Harley Benton brand has made significant strides in recent times with their budget-conscious bass offerings, and this electro-acoustic is no exception. Designed as a 'travel' bass, its 23.5" scale length makes it ideal for players who need an affordable alternative to carrying a long-scale, regular-sized instrument with them on their travels. Equipped with a three-band preamp and tuner, it would appear to have the necessary features of an electro-acoustic instrument. So how does it perform?

Build Quality

The bass displays some fine timber choices and finishing, with mahogany used for the back and sides, a sitka spruce top, a nyatoh neck and laurel fingerboard, and ivory binding around the body and fingerboard edges. An abalone rosette surrounds the soundhole, with pearl front position markers along the front of the fingerboard and black dot markers on the fingerboard edge. The chrome die-cast machine heads turn smoothly enough, not always a given at this price.

The short scale obviously gives the bass a smaller-than-usual feel, but the 43mm nut width and 18mm string spacing are standard dimensions, and the overall weight is pleasingly light. It comes with a piezo pickup hooked up to a Harley Benton HB-03 preamp on the top body edge, which offers a three-band EQ, tuner and phase switch, all of which are powered by a nine-volt battery via a compartment alongside the jack socket. Strap buttons are located on the side of the body and underneath the neck joint.

Sounds And Playability

Acoustic basses can be temperamental, but this one responds well, with a throaty rasp alongside a rounded low-end performance. Fitted with phosphor bronze strings, the bass has a natural 'zing', although it should be noted that the E-string feels a little dull and unresponsive compared to the edge of the other three strings.

The basic tonal character when unplugged is full, with considerable sustain and a very usable resonance. The strings coax livelier tones to the fore, which helps to offset the diminished tonal response that is a consequence of the reduced scale length. Considering how easy this bass is to transport, these are reasonable trade-offs.

Playing technique will be an important consideration with this bass: To achieve clarity and punch of any significance, you may choose to use a pick, as fingerstyle and thumb strokes will merely give you a warm, rounded tone. Dialling in some extra EQ across the three bands is recommended, but take it easy with the bass boost, as pushing it can make the sound distort.

The neck is shaped very nicely for the player's hand, and although the action is a little high, acoustic basses sound better with a slightly higher action, in my experience. Tuning the bass up is easy enough, but after a short testing session, its accuracy becomes noticeably suspect. This is a recurring issue, with the instrument struggling to maintain its tuning. The intonation on our review model is also out by some margin.

Once you travel above the twelfth fret, you may find that playing becomes a little tricky, such is the limited spacing between the frets. The strings are supple enough to enable bending, but for accuracy of note placement, you may spend a lot of time looking at the fingerboard.

Conclusion

Clearly, this is a bass of convenience, and while it addresses the requirements of the travelling bassist, I'm not convinced that you would want to use it on a gig or session. However, it will perform well enough for a rehearsal or home practice, and will be a decent enough option for a beginner. At this price, we won't complain about its flaws. You get what you pay for, right?

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

RRP | $202
Made In | Far East
Body | Mahogany back and sides, sitka spruce top
Neck | Nyatoh, 23.5" scale
Neck Join | Set neck
Nut Width | 43mm
Fingerboard | Indian laurel
Frets | 20
Pickups | Piezo pickup
Elctronics | Harley Benton HB-03 active three-band EQ preamp and tuner
Controls | Volume, bass, middle, treble, tuner, phase
Hardware | Chrome hardware, laurel bridge, die-cast machine heads
Weight | 4.2 lbs
Left-hand available? | No
Case/gigbag supplied? | No

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Affordable, portable
Minus | Tuners are unreliable
Overall | A decent beginner or backup acoustic bass

BP RATING

BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★★★☆☆☆
SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★★★☆☆☆
VALUE
★★★★★★★★☆☆

KUSTOM
KXB Combos

On a run of affordable gear this month, **Mike Brooks** plugs into two wallet-friendly amps

KUSTOM
kustom.com

$429, $200

Kustom's new KXB series of combos begins with 6" and 10" speaker-equipped 10-watt home practice units, and moves up to 20 and 100-watt alternatives, geared towards rehearsal and small-sized gigs. These units are sensibly priced and shouldn't blow too large a hole in your finances. Looking at the two combos here, simplicity and ease of use are common factors in their design, but do they pack enough of a punch where it counts?

Build Quality

Fitted with metal corner protectors, metal grilles, and rubber carry handles on the top of both units, the KXB100 and KXB10 follow a clean and simple design principle: This is carried over onto the control panel and selection of controls on both units. Simplicity is very much the order of the day here, with familiar EQ sections, so finding usable tones should be relatively simple. Both come with headphones and auxiliary connections.

Despite their relatively compact dimensions, both combos are seriously heavy, at 53 lbs and 23 lbs respectively: Neither of them makes use of lightweight timber construction or neodymium speakers, so we're talking old-school lifting effort here. Some bassists may accept this, but I suspect many of us may prefer lighter units that do similar jobs. However, if getting physical with your amplification doesn't dampen your enthusiasm, the rugged nature of both combos will serve them well on the road.

The KXB100 features venting on the rear of the amp for consistent airflow across the electronics, although the KXB10, due to its size and potential application as a home practice amp, doesn't have any ventilation as such. Both units are hard-wired, so there are no separate power cables, and the external jack output on the KXB100 is wired in series. This allows another speaker cab to be used without a minimum impedance load, while the combo speaker continues to function with the additional cabinet attached.

Sounds

Tested with a selection of active and passive basses, both combos do a reasonable job at conveying accurate tones. The KXB100's general tone, with the amp EQ set flat, is best described as solid, with the voicing warm and rounded. The 15" speaker conveys the warm tones of the passive basses and boosts the low EQ of the active basses, but upper mids and top-end details are lacking. Even if you boost the EQ on the amp, you may struggle to coax any sort of glassy highs from this amp. Still, rock players looking for power and brute force from their bass signal will find plenty to enjoy. Slap and tap players may argue that without a tweeter or horn, the tonal options are restricted, but then including this would push the price up: You get what you pay for.

The KXB10 has limited output for obvious reasons: It's been designed primarily for home use, and in that context, it performs very well. The smaller speaker offers a faster response, so the level of tonal detail is more refined than the hefty performance offered by the bigger combo. Playing with the EQ settings opens up some useful tonal variations but again, the tone remains generally chunky. Considering its intended use, its portable dimensions make it well suited for home practice, although it's still on the heavy side.

Conclusion

These combos do the jobs they were designed to do with a minimum of fuss. However, many modern bassists will look for a more lightweight alternative, or build a setup using smaller, lighter speaker enclosures. With cheaper combos on the market offering more functions and greater flexibility, these Kustom combos face stiff competition, but if a simply laid-out combo is for you and weight isn't an issue, both of these amps might just fit the bill.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

KUSTOM KXB100 COMBO
Price | $429
Made In | China
Power | 100 watts @ 4 ohms
Features | Gain, clip LED, master volume, bass (+/-14dB @ 60Hz), lo-mid (+/-12dB @ 340Hz), hi-mid (+/-10dB @ 2kHz), treble (+/-15dB @ 10kHz), direct out volume, ground/lift switch
Speakers | 1 x 15″ speaker, custom designed
Dimensions | 23.5″ (H) x 18.75″ (W) x 15″ (D)
Connections | 1/4″ jack inputs x 2 (0/-6dB), 3.5mm Auxiliary input, 3.5mm headphones output, 1/4″ jack external output socket, balanced XLR DI output (post EQ and post FX loop), 1/4″ jack FX Send/Return sockets
Weight | 53 lbs

KUSTOM KXB10 COMBO
Price | $200 approx
Made In | China
Power | 10 watts @ 4 ohms
Features | Volume, bass (+/-15dB @ 60Hz), mid (+/-15dB @ 500Hz), treble (+/-15dB @ 10kHz)
Speakers | 1 x 10″ speaker, custom designed
Dimensions | 17.5″ (H) x 13.8″ (W) x 10.4″ (D)
Connections | 1/4″ jack input, 3.5mm Auxiliary input, 3.5mm headphones output
Weight | 23 lbs

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Sensible prices, simple design
Minus | Heavy, few tonal frills
Overall | Capable performers, designed to do specific jobs

BP RATING

BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★★★☆☆☆
SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★★★☆☆☆
VALUE
★★★★★★★★★☆

ASHDOWN
John Myung Double Drive
FENDER
Trapper Bass Distortion

Two distortion pedals with four drives between them. Bring the noise, says Joel McIver

DAVITT & HANSER
www.davitthanser.com

FENDER
www.fender.com

$599
$169.99

Why take two distortion pedals out when you can take one? That's the logic behind both of these handsome effects units, one from Ashdown and the other from Fender. The former is the signature overdrive of Dream Theater's bassist extraordinaire John Myung, a user of Ashdown's amps, and the latter an all-purpose unit that is half the size and half the price. This review isn't a comparison of these two high-functioning units, though: Simply an exploration of what you can get for a certain outlay if you're looking for a pedal with more than one drive option.

Ashdown have produced their Double Drive pedal after consultation with Myung and his bass tech Maddi Schieferstein, the idea being to create a pedal that would sit well tonally with his signature Ernie Ball six-string Bongo. Myung is quoted as saying: "Drive 1 is great at harmonic distortion, and Drive 2 offers a great tweak in bass presence, being able to bring it out without getting in the way of itself." In other words, the first option adds and boosts overtones, while the second boosts high-mid and top frequencies.

Remove the JMDD from its packaging and its solidity is impressive, with the external case built using 1.6mm Zintec—or zinc-coated steel—with a 0.9mm alloy overpanel. It's heavy, but not problematically so, with your attention drawn immediately to the twin volume-unit meters, one per drive. Connect the unit with the two supplied six-foot cables (a first in our experience), and you're off, with the VU meters yellow when inactive and bluish-white when in use.

Select a drive, or both at the same time if you wish, and the VU meter/s will show you how high your input volume is, allowing you to back off a bit if you're in the red and thus risking clipping—unless, of course, that sound is what you want. However, such is the degree of available distortion that you're unlikely to need excess volume going in.

We tested Drive 1 with the Gain control on half and the Loud knob maxed, and we were rewarded with a cutting distortion with massive sustain. Roll on the Tone control if you need some extra clank, and indeed you might well require some of that, because the pedal retains all the bottom end you could ever need. Take the Loud control down

and some satisfyingly obnoxious mids emerge, which will be just the thing if you need to cut through heavy guitar tones.

Drive 2 is modulated by two suitably-titled Grit and Burn controls which add more of an edge or sharpness to the drive, itself a classic doomy distortion. Combine the two for a whole range of overdrive tones, using all five controls freely: Unlike cheaper effects units, the knobs operate across their entire turn, with no sudden surges to irritate you and your neighbors.

Use the Double Drive as an effects unit or DI: It has an XLR out and a Ground Lift switch, making it useful on stage or in the studio. Given all this, we're impressed with its build, tones, and price point.

The Fender Trapper—how did it get that name?—is a similar but simpler unit. It also offers the bassist two individual or stacked drive tones, and asks for significantly less of your taxed income than the Ashdown unit. Then again, it's nowhere near as tough in construction, it lacks the VU meters, and it hasn't been developed in conjunction with a bass-playing legend.

It's still a charming little unit, though, with two drives—Dist 1 and Dist 2—each of which has Gain, Tone and Level controls. It can't hope to offer the massive bass end of the Myung unit, and doesn't attempt to do so unless you invoke its secret weapon, the Sub-Bass control on Dist 2. This certainly helps to add a touch of bottom, but again, there's no really stomach-shaking low-end available. Still, it sounds pretty immense if low mids are your frequencies of choice, and we love its affordability.

The only thing that bothers me about the Trapper is the white control text on the orange-gold background. The pictures on this page make the lettering seem really clear, but believe me, the metallic finish plus bright lighting overhead makes it hard to read. Then again, I am old and tired. Use either of these tone beasts to wake people like me up.

Both the Trapper and the JMDD ask, 'Why take two drive pedals out when you can take just one?'

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

ASHDOWN JOHN MYUNG DOUBLE DRIVE
Price | $599
Made in | China
Features | Drive 1 with Gain, Loud and Tone controls, Drive 2 with Grit and Burn controls, 2 x VU meters, Ground Life switch, XLR out
Weight | 2.6lbs
Dimensions | H, W, D: 2.4" x 7" x 4.7"
Power | 9V power supply, supplied; 2 x instrument cables and an XLR cable also supplied

WHAT WE THINK
Plus | Solid, thunderous bottom end
Minus | Nothing
Overall | Perfect for bass-heavy crunch

BP RATING
BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★★★★★★
SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★★★★★★
VALUE
★★★★★★★★★☆

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

FENDER TRAPPER
Price | $169.99
Made in | China
Features | Dist 1 with Gain, Tone and Level controls, Dist 2 ditto plus Sub-Bass controls
Weight | 0.6lbs
Dimensions | H, W, D: 4.9" x 3.5" x 1.7"
Power | 9v power supply, not supplied

WHAT WE THINK
Plus | Sub-bass boost
Minus | Hard to read control text
Overall | Affordable way to combine drives

BP RATING
BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★★★★★☆
SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★★★★★☆
VALUE
★★★★★★★★★☆

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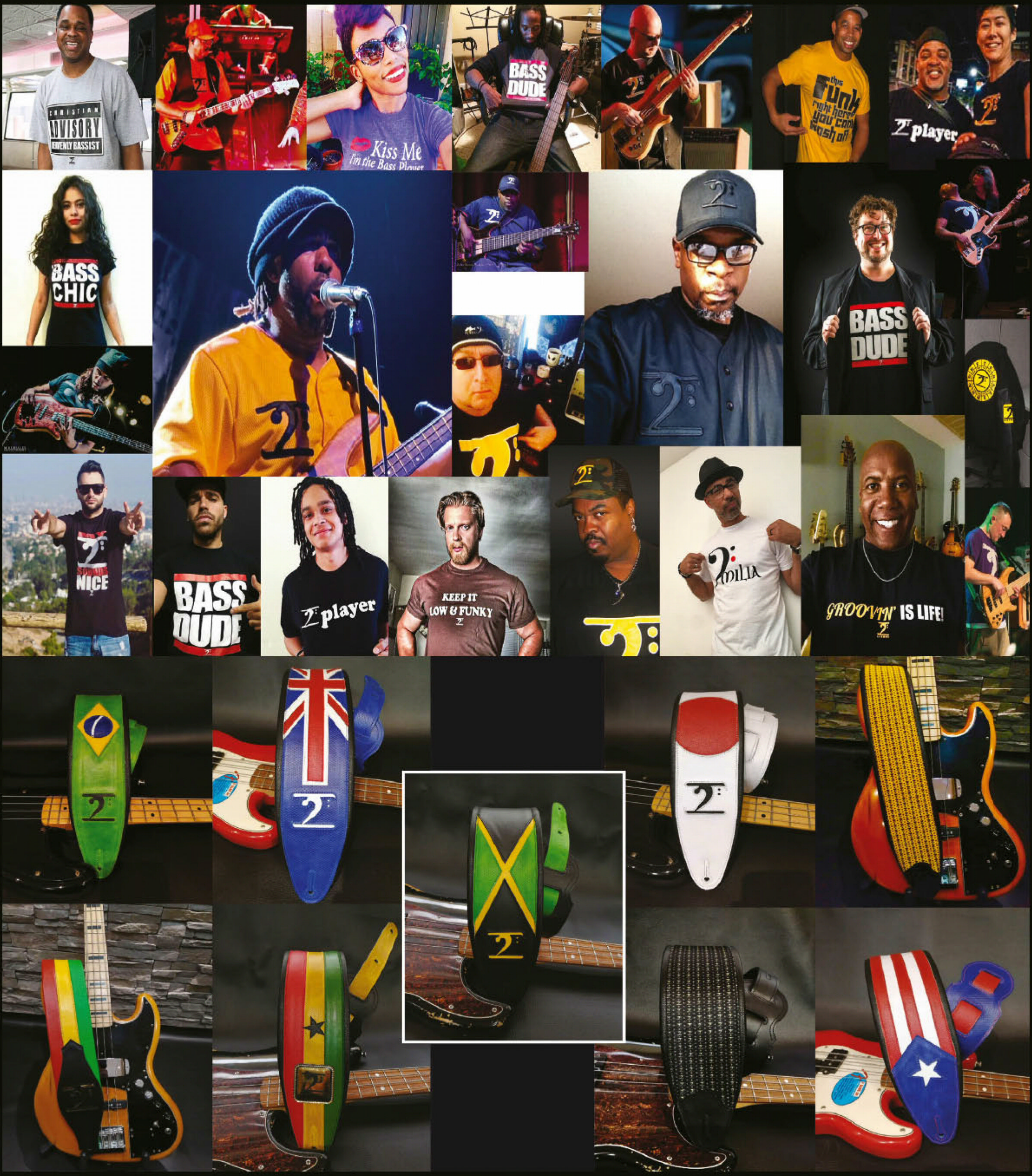

www.lathonbasswear.com

Bass Lessons

Making you a better bass player in every issue, our state-of-the-art team of educators will guide you every step of the way. Say hello to them here!

I SPY… 62

RYAN MADORA

Dig into your favorite bass parts… and discover treasure!
Ryan Madora is one of Nashville's most sought-after touring and session bassists. Recent touring and session credits include Robben Ford, Kyshona Armstrong, and her instrumental trio, The Interludes. For the past five years, she has served as musical director for Bobby Bones, and has played with Garth Brooks, Darius Rucker, and Carrie Underwood. In addition to instructing at Nashville's campus of Musician's Institute, Ryan has taught at Gerald Veasley's Bass Boot Camp, Rock'n'Roll Fantasy Camp, and at colleges across the USA. She has contributed columns to No Treble for over a decade, and in 2019, published her first book, *Bass Players To Know: Learning From The Greats*. Ryan offers online education at TrueFire and her website.

www.ryanmadora.com
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BEGINNER 64

STEVE LAWSON

Kickstart your journey to the top of the bass world here
Steve Lawson is the UK's most celebrated solo bass guitarist. Across more than two decades of touring, and a huge catalog of solo and collaborative albums, he's built up a worldwide audience for his looping and processing approach to bass sound. Recent collaborators include Beardyman, Reeves Gabrels, Andy Gangadeen, Tanya Donelly, Divinity Roxx, and Jonas Hellborg. He been teaching bass for almost three decades, and lectures at universities and colleges across the globe. Victor Wooten once commented, 'Steve Lawson is a brilliant musician. I've known about him and listened to him for many years. He may not be one of the most famous bassists—but he is definitely one of the most talented'. Who are we to argue?

www.stevelawson.net
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INTERMEDIATE 70

PHILIP MANN

Now you're rolling, it's time to hit the next level
Philip Mann studied at the London College of Music, securing bachelor's and master's degrees in performance before receiving a scholarship to study under Jeff Berlin at the Players School of Music in Florida. Endorsed by Overwater and Eich, he's a busy, internationally freelancing electric and double bassist. His performance and session credits include work with Grammy Award-winning artists Van Morrison and Albert Lee, five-time Grammy Award nominee Hunter Hayes, Deep Purple's Steve Morse, Leo Sayer, Billy Bragg, and country artist Peter Donegan. Author of the *Chord Tone Concepts* texts, Philip is currently a member of the visiting faculty at the Players School while simultaneously lecturing for Scott's Bass Lessons.

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ADVANCED 76

RICH BROWN

Maximize your bass skills with our advanced studies
Toronto-born electric bassist Rich Brown has established himself as an incredibly versatile artist. Along with being one of the most called-upon electric bass players in Canada, Rich is a composer, producer, bandleader, educator and clinician, broadcaster, and voiceover artist. He has recorded three albums as a leader, including his critically acclaimed album of solo bass compositions, *Between Heaviness & Here*. Rich appears on a plethora of recordings, from jazz to traditional Arabic and Asian music. He has performed with a wide variety of artists, including Rudresh Mahanthappa, Vijay Iyer, Steve Coleman, and Angelique Kidjo. Rich leads two groups—rinsethealgorithm and The Abeng—and was nominated for a Juno Award in 2016 for his latest album, *Abeng*.

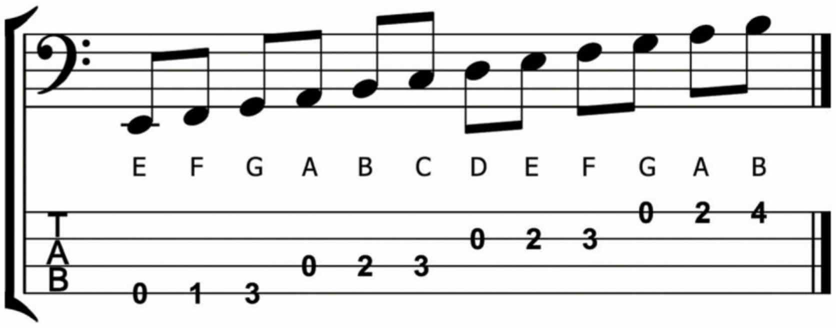
fbass.com/artists/rich-brown
Instagram richbrownbass
YouTube Brown'stone With Rich Brown

BP Notation Legend

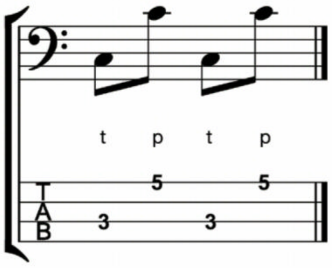
The following is a guide to the notation symbols and terminology used in Bass Player magazine

The Stave: Most music written for the bass guitar uses the bass clef. The example to the right shows the placement of the notes on the stave.

Tablature: This is a graphical representation of the music. Each horizontal line corresponds with a string on the bass guitar, with the lowest line representing the lowest pitched string (E). The numbers represent the frets to be played. Numbers stacked vertically indicate notes that are played together. Where basses with five or six strings are required, the tablature stave will have five or six lines as necessary.

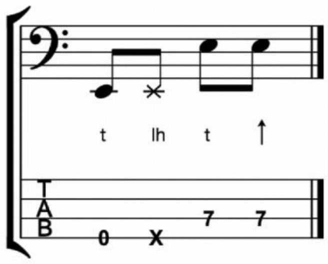


PLAYING TECHNIQUES



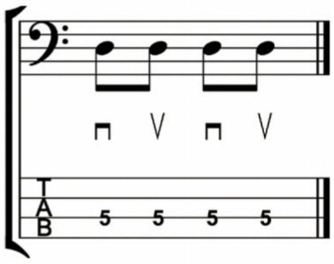
SLAP AND POP TECHNIQUE

Notes slapped with the thumb are marked with a ‘t’, notes popped with the fingers marked with a ‘p’.



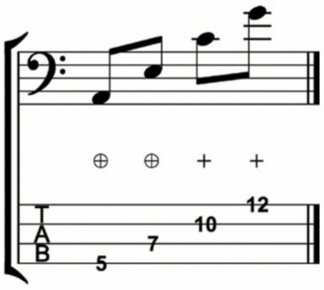
ADVANCED SLAP TECHNIQUE

Fretting hand slaps are marked ‘lh’ and double thumbing upstrokes are shown with an upward pointing arrow.



PLECTRUM TECHNIQUE

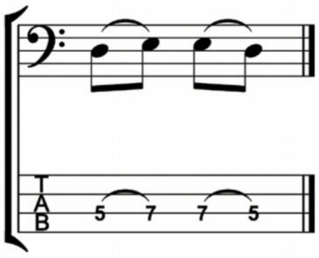
Where necessary, down and upstrokes with the pick will be shown using these symbols (down-up-down-up).



TAPPING TECHNIQUES

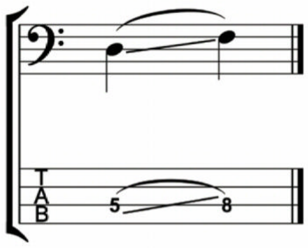
Fretting hand taps have a ‘+’ in a circle. Picking hand taps are just ‘+’. Particular fingers may be shown with numbers.

FRETTING TECHNIQUES



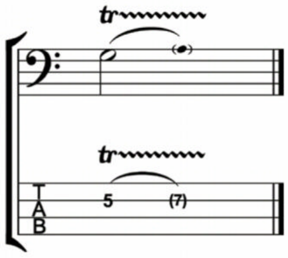
HAMMER-ON AND PULL-OFF

These are shown with a slur over the notes. Only the first note is plucked by the picking hand.



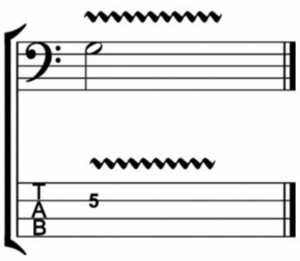
SLIDE (GLISSANDO)

Slides are performed by playing the first note and then sliding the fretting finger up to the second note.



TRILLS

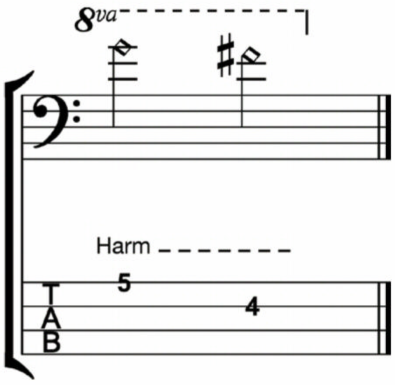
Trills are performed by rapidly alternating between the two notes shown, using hammer-ons and pull-offs.



VIBRATO

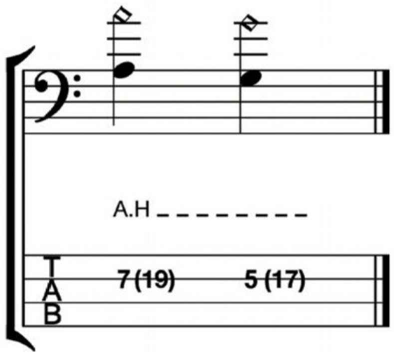
The pitch of the note is altered by repeatedly bending the string up and back with the fretting finger.

PLAYING HARMONICS



NATURAL HARMONICS

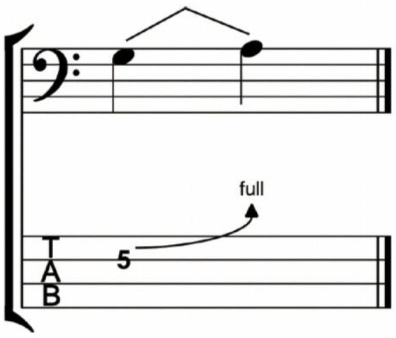
The note is played as a harmonic by lightly touching the string above the fret indicated.



ARTIFICIAL HARMONICS

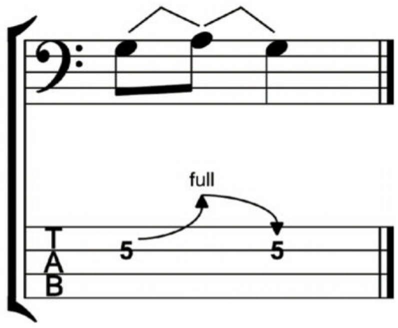
Pluck while fretting the lower note and touching the edge of the picking hand thumb to the note in brackets.

BENDING NOTES



BEND

The note is bent upwards to the interval specified: ½ indicates a semitone, ‘full’ indicates a tone.



BEND AND RELEASE

The note is bent up to the interval indicated and then released back to its original pitch.

Ryan Madora

I SPY...

EXPLORE EIGHTH NOTE TRIPLETS

Nashville-based session and stage bassist Ryan Madora is here to dig into bass parts that we know and love for useful information. Pay attention!

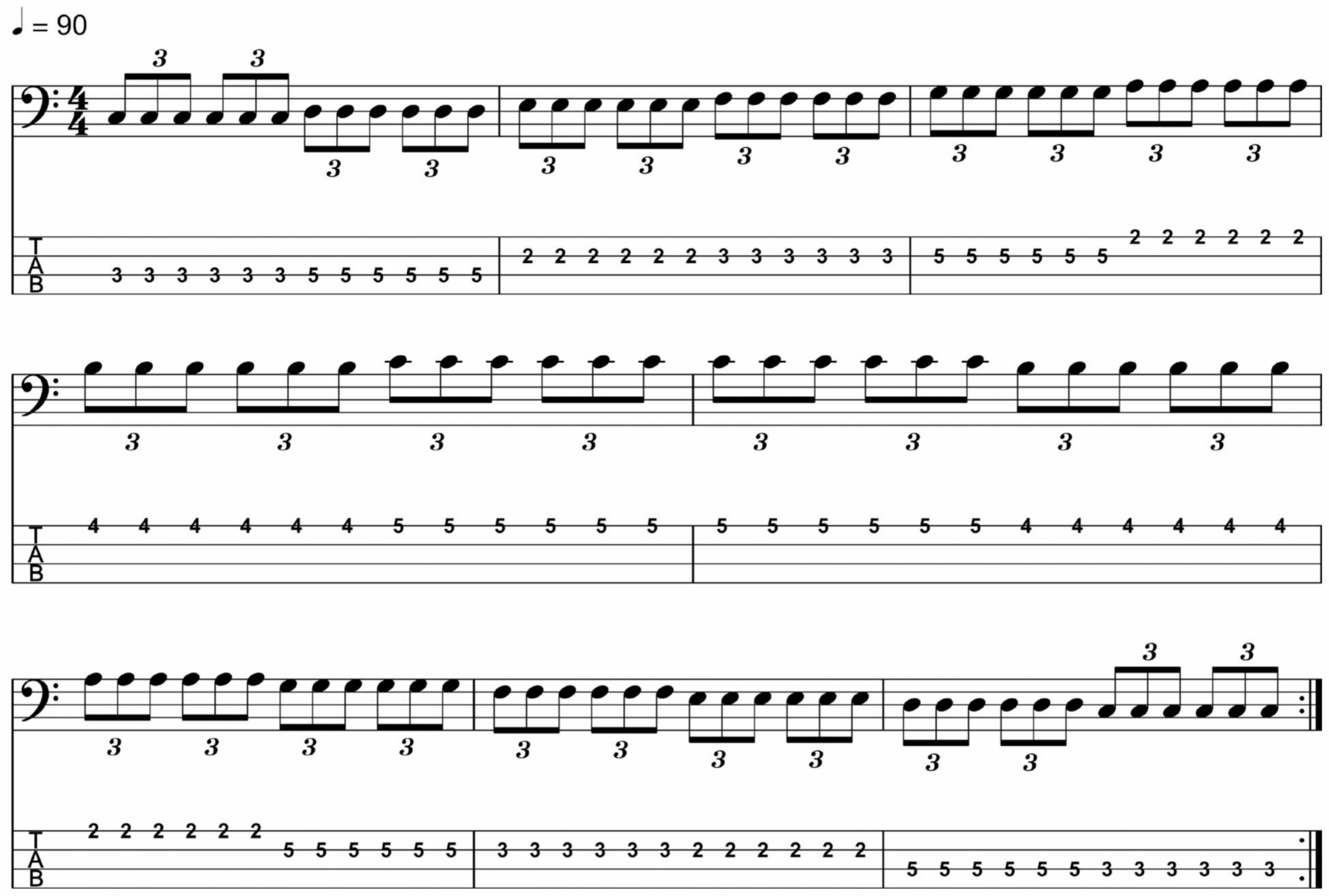
Hey there, bass players! If you're following this series, then you're well acquainted with the world of eighth notes. My previous column featured the swung eighth note, where we tapped into the world of jazz, blues shuffles, and even pop records with an underlying swing. Now, let's subdivide a beat into three notes, resulting in eighth note triplets.

Eighth note triplets are extremely common and versatile. They're not limited to swung or shuffled feels and pack quite a rhythmic punch in rock, metal, funk, soul—you name it. While regular eighth notes subdivide a beat into two increments, eighth note triplets subdivide a beat into three increments. We often speak this rhythm as 'tri-pa-let'. Unlike the swung eighth note, the eighth note triplet doesn't necessary imply an overall swing, though it is particularly common in jazz, blues, and other swung or shuffled feels.

Let's get acquainted with the eighth note triplet by playing up and down a C Major scale in **Exercise 1.** This is a great technical exercise and a useful warm-up for both your fretting and plucking hand. Begin on C at the 3rd fret of the A string and use the four-fret-span fingering to play the scale ascending, then descending. Play each note of the scale for two beats each, using eighth note triplets. This will result in six total attacks per note of the scale. Pay attention to your plucking hand and try to be as smooth and consistent as possible while alternating between your index and middle finger. Play this exercise slowly, just to get the mechanics of it down: 70bpm might be a good starting point. Repeat the exercise multiple times, increasing the tempo as you get more comfortable.

Now that you've got a feel for triplets, let's put them into context. As we learned in the

EXERCISE ONE



previous column, swung eighth notes are often used to play blues shuffles. The overall feel involves playing the first and third of the triplet, or 'tri-pa-let'. We can add simple variations or fills by playing an eighth note triplet and hitting all of the syllables. This typically occurs on beat 4, functioning as a transition or as a way to mark the form.

In **Exercise 2,** play a 12-bar blues in the key of G. We'll take advantage of the "blues box" pattern, using the root, fifth, minor seventh, and octave. Begin on G, the root note of the first chord (3rd fret of the E string). Play the fifth, D (5th fret of the A string), the minor seventh, F (3rd fret of the D string), and the octave, G (5th fret of the D string). You'll see that this pattern creates the shape of a box, moving between the 3rd and 5th frets.

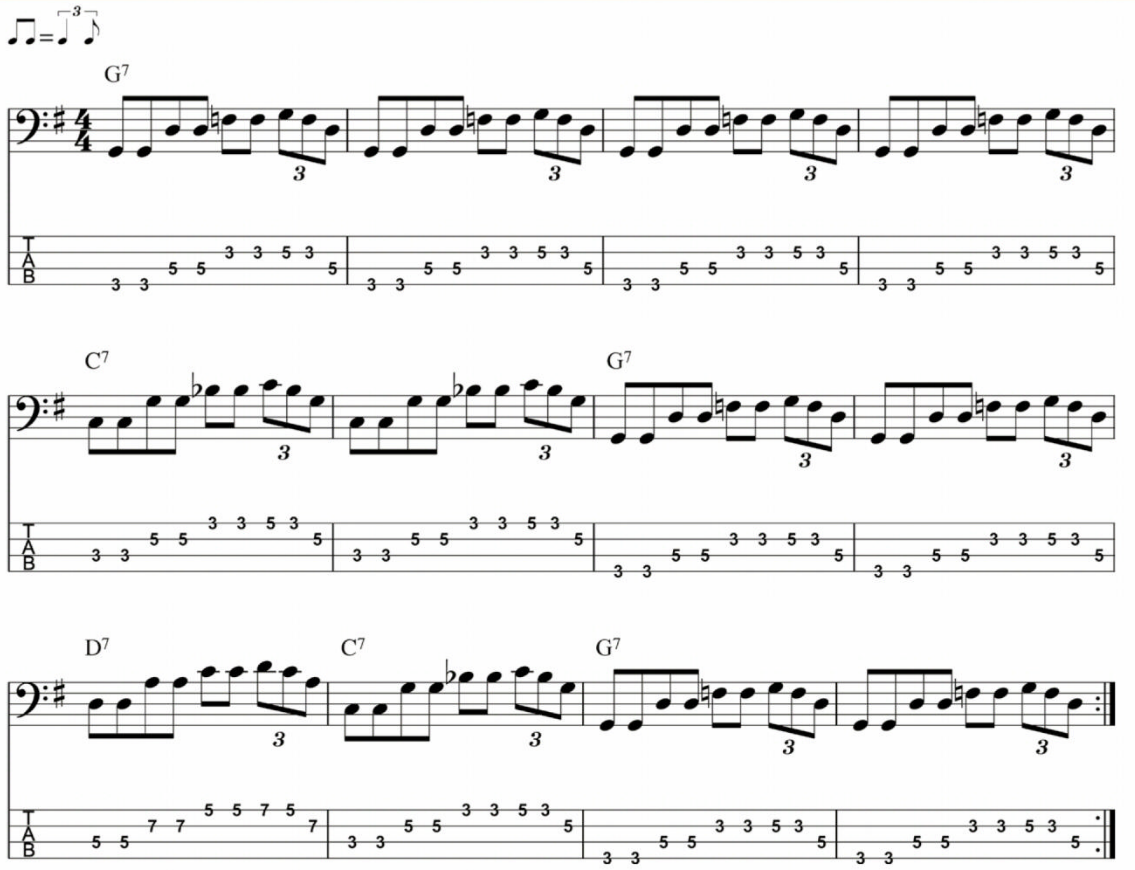
For the first three beats, play swung eighths, or two attacks per note. On the last beat, play an eighth note triplet. Hit the octave and descend to the minor seventh and fifth. This should naturally feel like it's falling down the pattern, ultimately wanting to return to the root note to repeat the pattern. Once you're comfortable, move the pattern to the other chords in the progression—C, the IV chord, and D, the V chord.

Before moving on, let's do some spying! This method of integrating eighth note triplets can be found on plenty of blues and rock recordings, from old-school Chess productions to ZZ Top albums. To hear this move in particular, check out the Robben Ford tune, 'Cannonball Shuffle', from the 2003 album *Keep On Running*. The bass-line uses the pattern from **Exercise 2** and features the eighth note triplet every other bar. It provides just enough variation, plays to the syncopation of the shuffle feel, and marks the transitions within the 12-bar form.

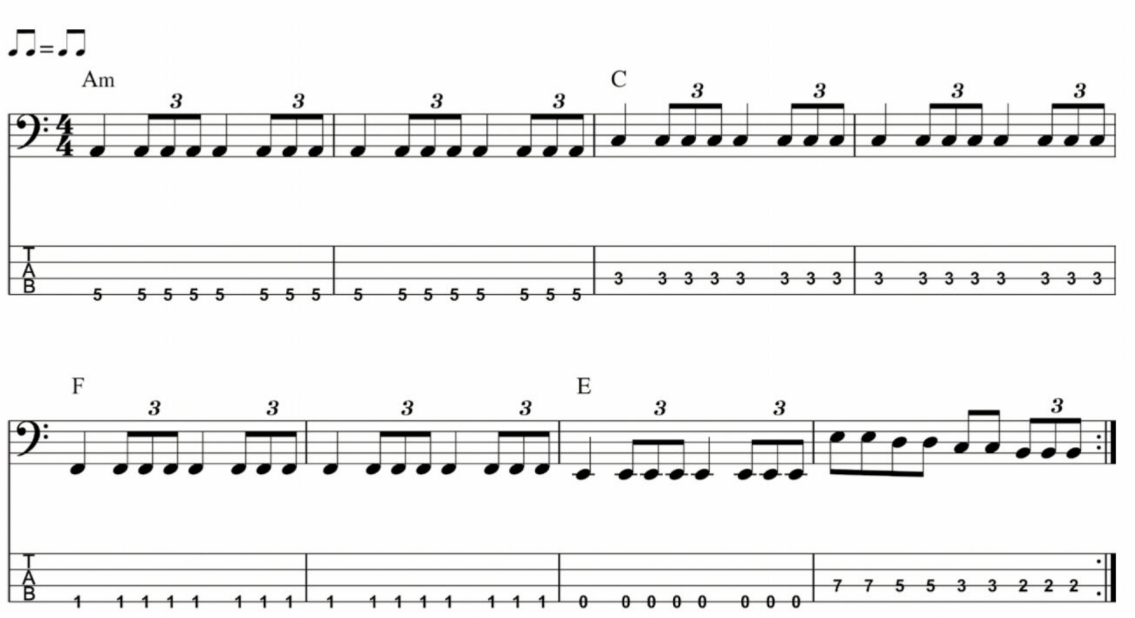
Now that we've spied this rhythm in the world of blues, let's transcend the swing and shuffle feel. Found in almost all styles, tempos, and time periods of music, eighth note triplets carry plenty of weight. They can imply a waltz feel or a galloping heaviness, they can be melancholy or light-hearted, and they can be spied in everything from the Romantic era to contemporary rock records. While we won't spend much time discussing classical music, a "quick spy" reference for this rhythm is the opening theme of 'Moonlight Sonata'. Did Beethoven begin one of the most iconic pieces of music with a minor arpeggio and eighth note triplets? Yes, he certainly did.

Fast-forward to the modern era and you'll find that eighth note triplets are frequently used to provide heaviness and syncopation in rock and metal. Plenty of riffs involve both straight time quarter or eighth notes and

EXERCISE TWO



EXERCISE THREE



eighth note triplets. Placing these rhythms side by side provides rhythmic contrast. It can be demanding and unsettling, as if an army of orcs are about to storm a castle, but that's why they've become a hallmark of the genre.

Let's practice a rock-inspired rhythmic pattern in **Exercise 3.** This features a minor sounding chord progression, Am—C—F—E. Each chord is played for two bars, with the rhythmic pattern of quarter notes on beats 1 and 3 and eighth note triplets on beats 2 and 4. The only exception is the final bar, where we descend the A minor scale using eighth notes on the first three beats (E, D, and C) and eighth note triplets on the last beat (B). This descending line ushers us back to the tonic and clearly speaks the language of metal.

Whether fuelled by rage or unrequited love, the eighth note triplet reigns rhythmically supreme in Megadeth's 'In My Darkest Hour' from 1988's *So Far, So Good... So What!* The introduction begins with big guitars, bold hits, and eighth note melodies. As the band kicks into the verse, the rhythm section digs into a pattern featuring eighth note triplets played on beats two and four, very similar to Exercise 3. The contrast of the two sections paints the perfect picture of rhythmic interplay and shows us exactly how heavy these eighth note triplets can be. See you next month!

Beginners Lesson

FUNK IT UP!

GETTING FUNKY – PART 3

The great Steve Lawson brings us a new approach to studying bass at beginner level. The journey begins...

Welcome! For part three of our look at how to bring more of a funk feel to our bass-lines, we're going to look at the role of chromatic lines in creating the sound that we most commonly associate with funk. These are ideas that transfer into a lot of other situations, so once you've learned them with an emphasis on funk, you can then experiment with where else they fit. Harmonic ideas are often a lot more resilient to a change of context than we imagine. We learn a lot of 'rules' about how things are meant to be played, but progress in all styles has always happened because people pushed at the edges of what was previously thought to be 'the way to do things'. So feel free to experiment with all these ideas!

Progress in all styles has always happened because people pushed at the edges of what was thought to be 'the way to do things'

The word 'chromatic' means relating to all 12 notes of the chromatic scale. Our usage is that we will be exploring short sections of the chromatic scale—three or four adjacent semitones—to act as the connective tissue within the notes of a given chord.

We're also going to introduce some new rhythmic accents that you may encounter in funkier music situations. If you're struggling with these, as usual I recommend that you download the free score-writing software Musescore and put the notes in to hear it, or find a friend—on any instrument—who is more comfortable with notation to play the line for you. While it's obviously true that it's possible to play an instrument brilliantly without reading music, it is the common written language for everything we do, and while TAB is great for communicating with other bass players, notation gives us access to any music for any instrument. We can also write parts out for other instruments, or just use it as a way to remember tricky parts that we don't have the time to practice long enough to commit to long-term memory.

To introduce the idea of chromatic notes, we're going to play a four-note walk up to the roots of a two-chord vamp (refer back to last month for more on these vamps). This time, we're going to use A minor 7 and D7—a ii-V progression in the key of G Major.

EXERCISE ONE

Exercise 1 starts on F#. It's in the key of G Major, the seventh note in the scale, but doesn't appear in our A minor chord. That's why we're anticipating beat one of the bar, and playing the walk-up so that beat one is the root of the chord. The easiest way to count this is to count the eighth notes (quavers) as '1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &' and to start the walk on the '&' after 3.

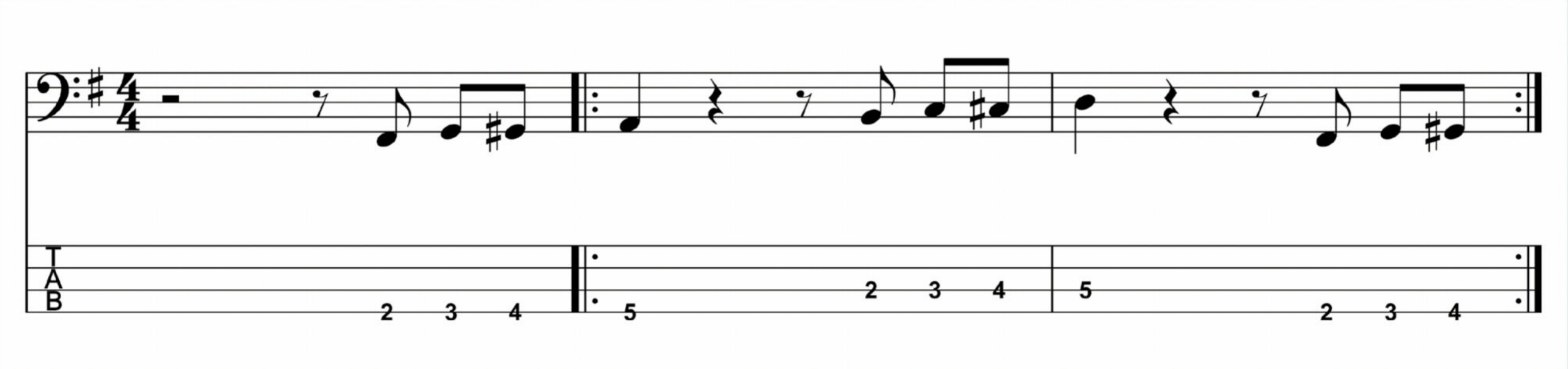
You'll notice that the repeat bars—the double lines at the start of one bar and the end of the bar after it—leave out the first three notes. That's because they're also in the second bar of the loop, so that first bar is only meant to be played the very first time. After that, we just loop round the two bars in between the repeat bar-lines.

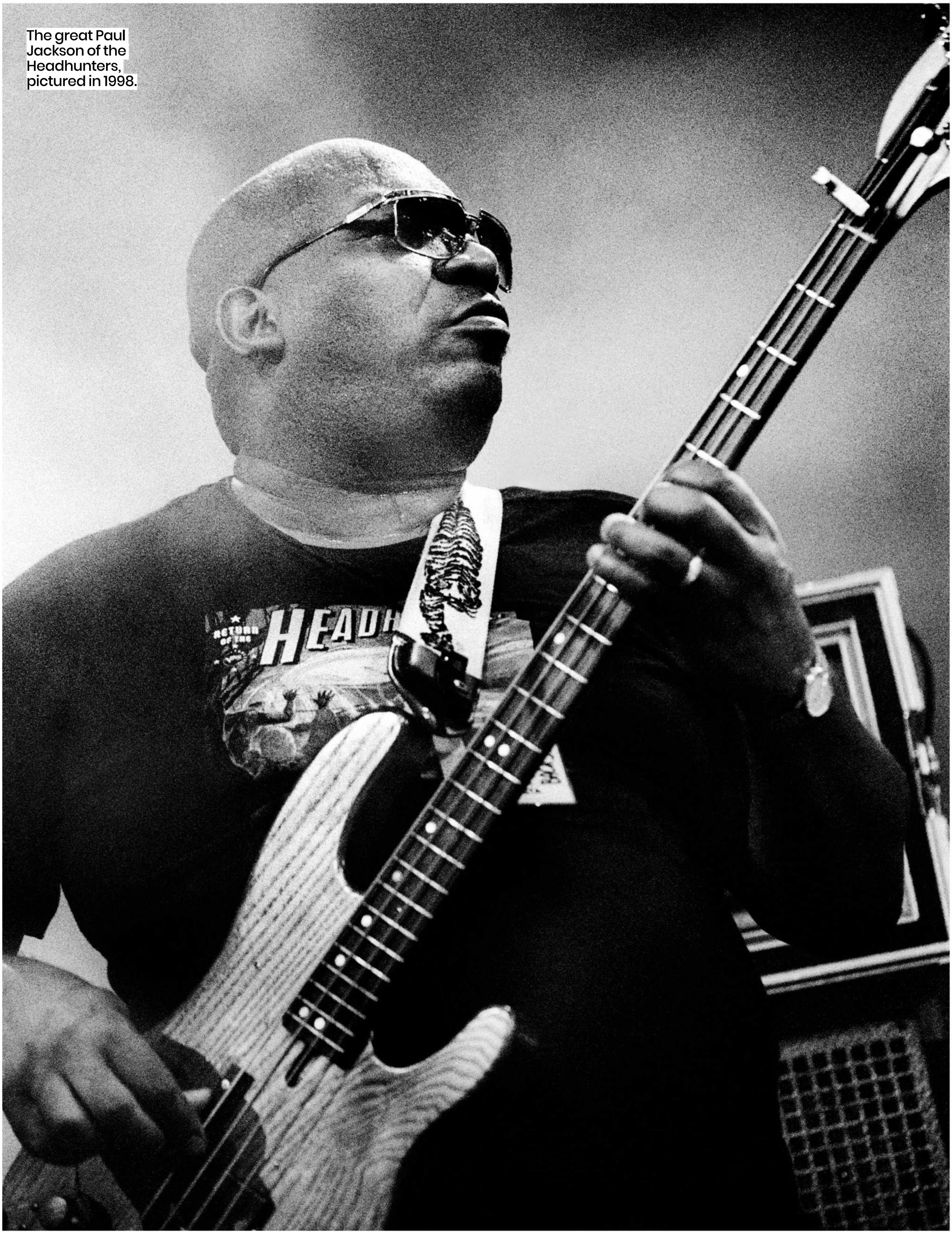
This anticipation of the bar at the start is a really useful skill to get familiar with. Loads of bass-lines start with a pick-up halfway through a bar ahead of what is effectively our first bar. At first, it's good practice to consciously count it, in your head or out loud, but after a while you'll start to feel it more naturally. Don't feel the need to rush that process. Counting is good practice, but eventually you'll realize that you no longer need to be quite so aware of the beat numbers in the bar, as the shape of grooves in 4/4 makes more sense to you.

With Exercise 1, it's worth being aware of how big that time gap is between the root on the first beat of the bar and the start of the walk-up. Try playing it as written, with a long rest, and then try it with the root note sustained through the gap. It will feel considerably less funky with the sustained note. Try to imagine what a guitar part might sound like that would fill the gap.

Let's move the chromatic line so that it approaches the fifth instead of the root, and see what that does to our line.

EXERCISE ONE

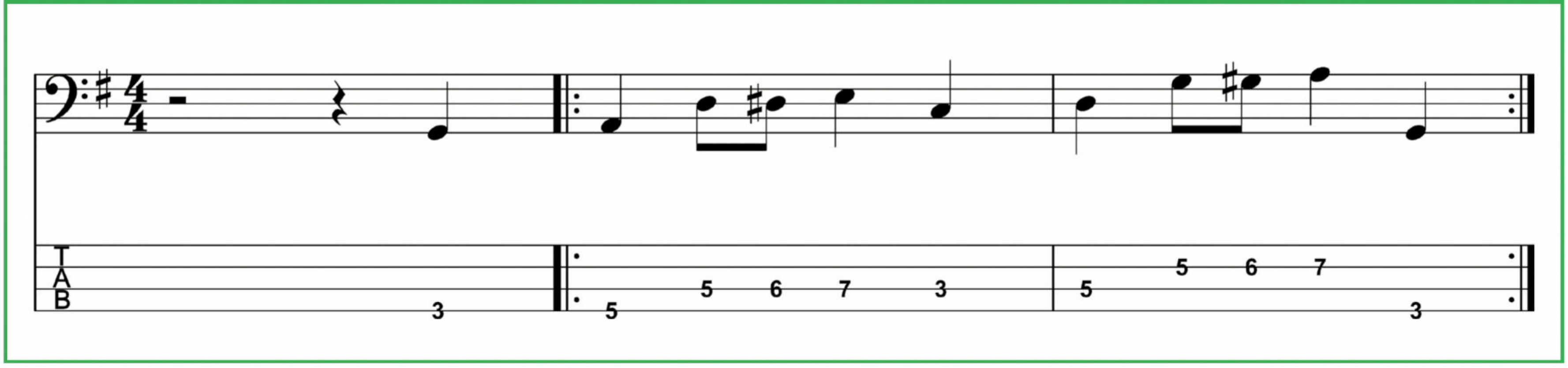




The great Paul Jackson of the Headhunters, pictured in 1998.

Peter Van Breukelen/Redferns/Getty

EXERCISE TWO



EXERCISE TWO

Exercise 2 again starts ahead of the bar line, this time on beat 4, and the walk-up happens in the middle of the bar to anticipate beat 3, which is the second strongest beat in the bar. The fifth lands on beat 3, and the root on beat 1 and the fifth on beat 3 is as foundational as a bass-line can get, so we're just adding color around that.

You may have noticed that the walk-up starts a fourth above each root note. This appears in the parent key of G for both chords, but because of our focus on landing on chord notes on the strong beats 1 and 3 it's far less of a concern than it otherwise might be. It's just the starting point for a line that points directly to the fifth, and is timed to land on that fifth on the third beat of the bar.

Let's have a closer look at how our fretting hand approaches these kinds of lines. You may have come across the concept of 'one finger per fret'—that is, being able to play four adjacent semitones consecutively with each finger of your fretting hand. Whether or not this is remotely comfortable or advisable depends on a whole load of factors, not least of all the size of your hands in relation to the size of your bass! What I would strongly advise is that you spend as little time as possible with your muscles under tension: If you're having to stretch to maintain a particular position for more than a second or two, it's worth taking some time to see if there's a more relaxed way to play it while retaining the correct feel, tone and note lengths.

The best way to think about this is to use the thumb of your fretting hand as an anchor and allow your hand to pivot slightly left and right to reach the outside notes of your group of four, instead of stretching for them. If that still feels difficult, or you have trouble fretting the strings with your third (ring) finger, you can also use what would more traditionally be thought of as double bass fingering. This means playing the last two notes of our four-note chromatic walk-up with your little finger, and bracing it with your third finger so that the two weakest fingers work together.

It's worth taking time to see if there's a more relaxed way to play, while retaining the feel

Over time, your muscles will get looser and stronger, and you'll be able to experiment further with one finger per fret, but I'd advise against doing any substantial resistance exercises to strengthen your fingers without some kind of medical supervision. For every player I've met who told me they gained amazing grip strength and stamina through this, I know another who overdid it and ended up having to take weeks or months away from playing, due to wrist and finger injury. When in doubt, talk to a doctor or physiotherapist. If you do a web search for 'hand exercises', you'll find non-resistance exercises that will gently increase strength and mobility.

To finish up our line-building this week, let's combine our first two exercises and

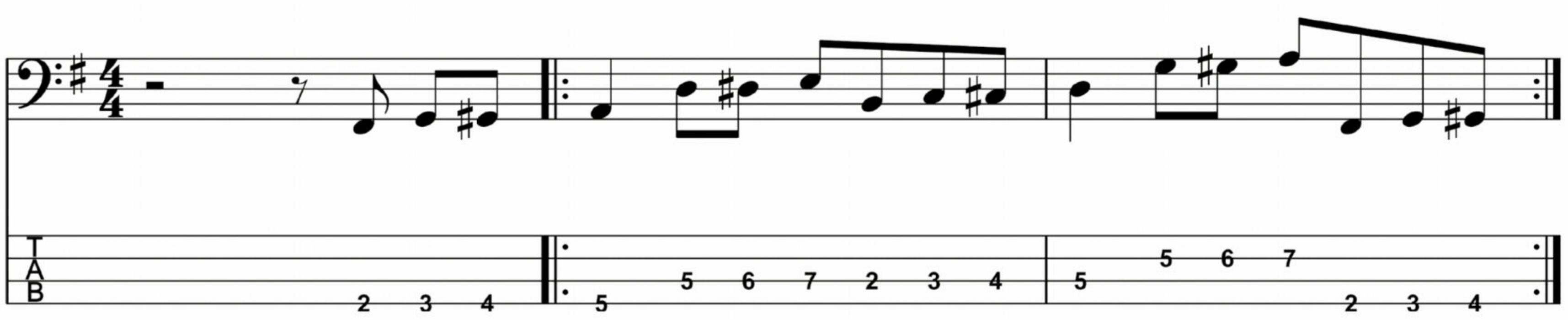
Stuart Zender, co-founder of Jamiroquai.

DAVID X PRUITTING/Patrick McMullan via Getty

Gary Grainger laying down grooves in 2009.

Getty

EXERCISE THREE



create a chromatic bass-line with loads of movement that still outlines the root and fifth of each chord. If you're working on a song that has the same or very similar chords for the verse and chorus, it can be really useful to have a number of ways to build a line throughout the course of the song, so that it progresses in terms of energy and style without having to add extra harmonic elements. By keeping the root and fifth in place, we're able to make sure that the harmonic basis of the tune is maintained, even while playing a slinky chromatic line.

EXERCISE THREE

Exercise 3 needs to be practiced very slowly at first. There's a lot of string-crossing going on, which is very often the hardest element in any line. Co-ordinating our hands across the strings so that we hit the next note in time and don't get one hand there earlier than the other is often a slow process that needs to be gradually worked up to speed over time. Remember that speed is a consequence of getting the line right in a relaxed and efficient way, rather than an end in itself.

Take your time to really get a handle on how the notes dance across the strings. The drop down in the second bar of the repeated phrase from the high A to the low G is particularly tricky in the middle of a run of eighth notes, so pay particular attention to how that works.

One way I like to think of what we're able to do here with chromatic notes is to treat our two pentatonic scales—major and minor – as a 'skeleton' on which to hang chromatic lines. The rule is that any pair of notes in the corresponding pentatonic pattern for the chord you're on can be joined up with the chromatic notes in between. This means we're only ever going to be playing three- or four-note chromatic sequences. The biggest interval in either pentatonic is the minor third (three frets) and the smallest is a major second (two frets), so we don't have a whole load of new ideas and material to learn.

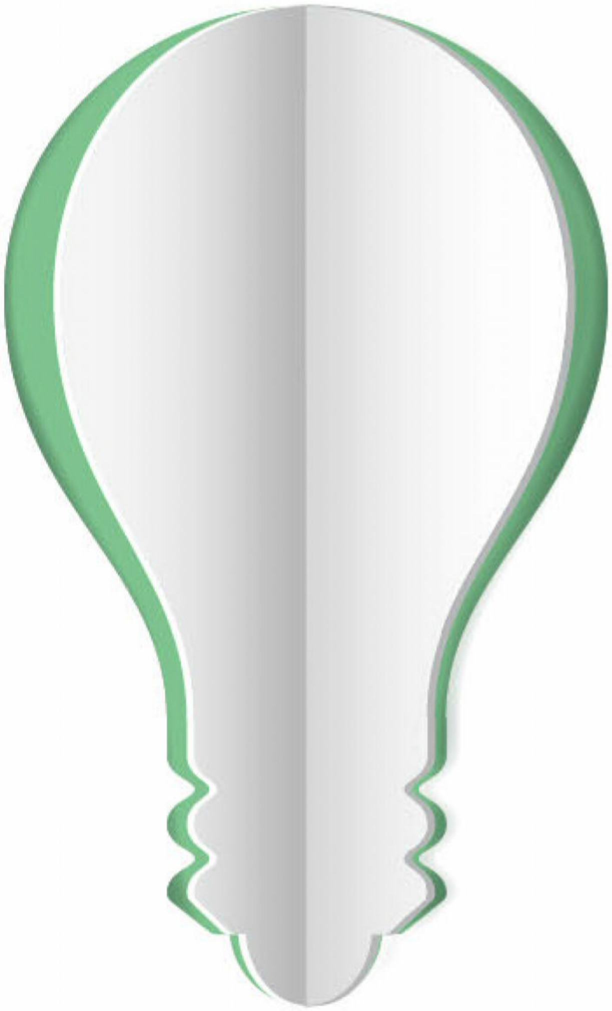
Studying funk is about learning the lessons the players who pioneered the style came up with

As long as we focus on landing on chord notes on beats one and three, we can experiment with chromatic runs that bring life and movement to our lines without the need for extensive theoretical study. We've explored this concept before in this column, but revisiting it in the context of funk lines gives us a chance to apply it in new ways.

Lastly, don't forget to listen. Funk and its derivatives aren't academic forms of music. Studying them is about learning the lessons that the players who pioneered the styles came up with. We can write those lessons down, but never forget that they were developed by playing, by bassists and drummers working together to make things more funky, exciting, danceable. Whether that's the great James Brown rhythm sections of the Sixties, Herbie Hancock's Headhunters in the Seventies or funk-fusion greats like Gary Grainger and Dennis Chambers in John Schofield's band in the Eighties, deep listening will give you a greater insight into the feel you're aiming for when playing ideas and patterns that have been explained theoretically. So always make time to listen!

Bassist Leah Julius delivers the low end.

Jim Bennett/Getty



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Phil Mann is a stage and session star and educator extraordinaire. Get ready to step up your bass game!

NEXT STEPS

NASHVILLE NUMBERING EXPLORED

Let's consider the Nashville numbering system, as it's an essential component in the development of any aspiring musician. The concept is relatively simple: Off every step of a scale, a coinciding chord can be produced. This chord is then numbered accordingly, which in turn allows us to communicate progressions to one another using numeric formulas. For example, Gmaj7—Emin7—Amin7—D7 could simply be portrayed as a I-VI-II-V in G Major. The approach is decisive, effective, and a wonderful learning aid.

Once you become aware of this system, you'll start to notice how regularly some chord progressions feature in contemporary music. In fact, it's not uncommon for genres such as the blues to be pretty much defined by their progressions. This is partly the reason why it's possible to encounter a song

Once you become aware of this system, you'll notice how regularly some chord progressions feature in contemporary music

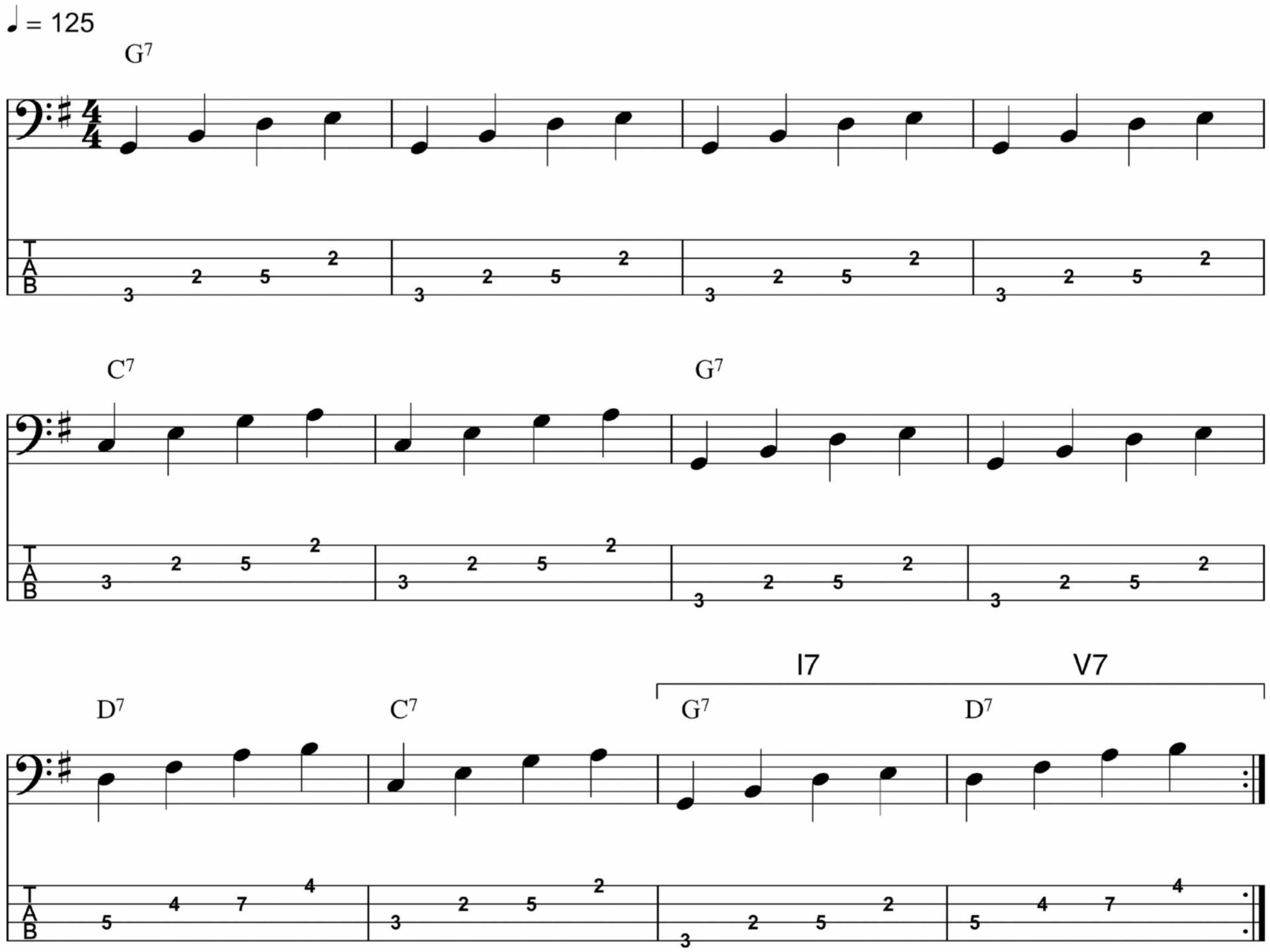
on the radio and think to yourself, 'That sounds just like a song I heard 10 years ago': It's more than likely because the same chord progression is being used.

If there's generally so much repetition in composition, maybe the answer to improving our musicianship doesn't always occur in learning more information, but simply in refining the skill sets you already have. More doesn't always mean better, but I promise that by isolating the more frequent changes and allowing a prolonged period for their mastery, you'll soon notice a significant improvement in your overall musicality.

The mighty Stuart Hamm!

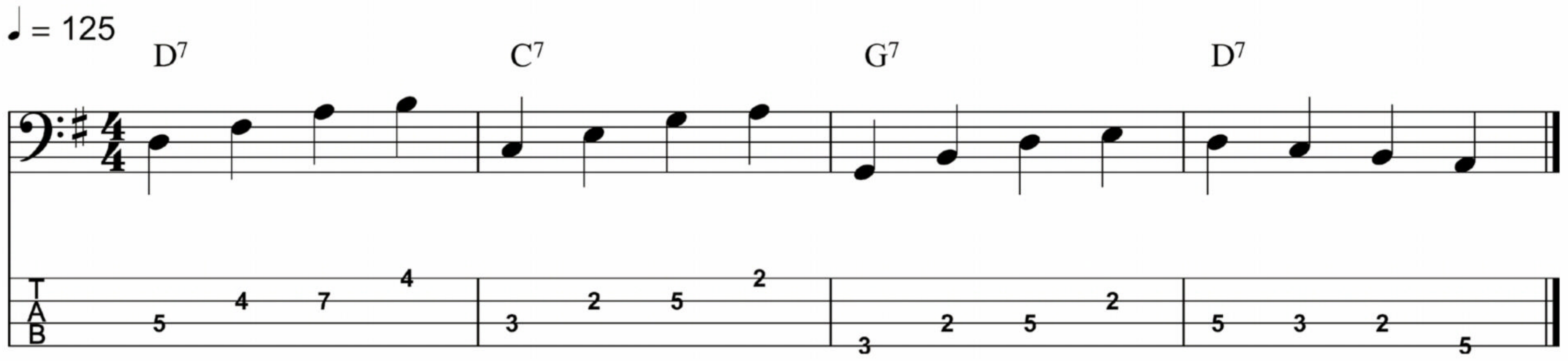
Richard Ecclestone/Redferns via Getty

EXERCISE ONE



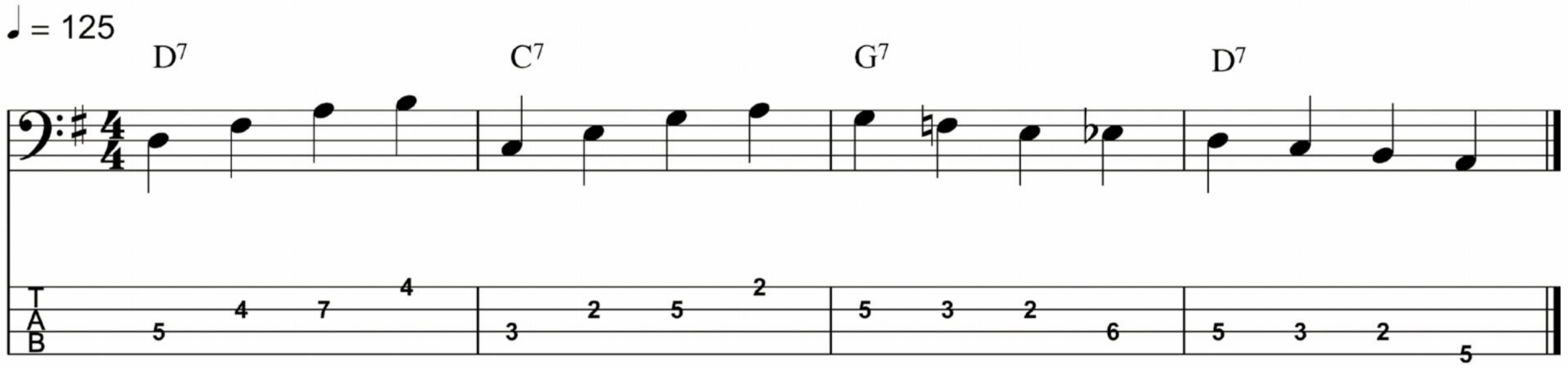
Exercise 1 depicts the changes in a rudimentary 12-bar blues. The phrase 'turnaround' refers to the sequence of chords in the final bars of a progression. Play through these measures, ensuring familiarity with the melodic and harmonic relationships in the progression, particularly those in bars 11 and 12 (I7-V7).

EXERCISE TWO



In these exercises, we're going to concentrate on refining our melodic portrayal of I7-V7 turnarounds. This is the first of what I refer to as the 'eight essential changes'. Exercise 2 takes our first steps into this vocabulary by isolating and exploring the final two bars of the previous progression, conveyed over four measures. In bar 11, play the rudimentary bass-line from Exercise 1, but once you arrive at bar 12, you'll be required to descend down the D Mixolydian scale, resolving back to the tonic.

EXERCISE THREE

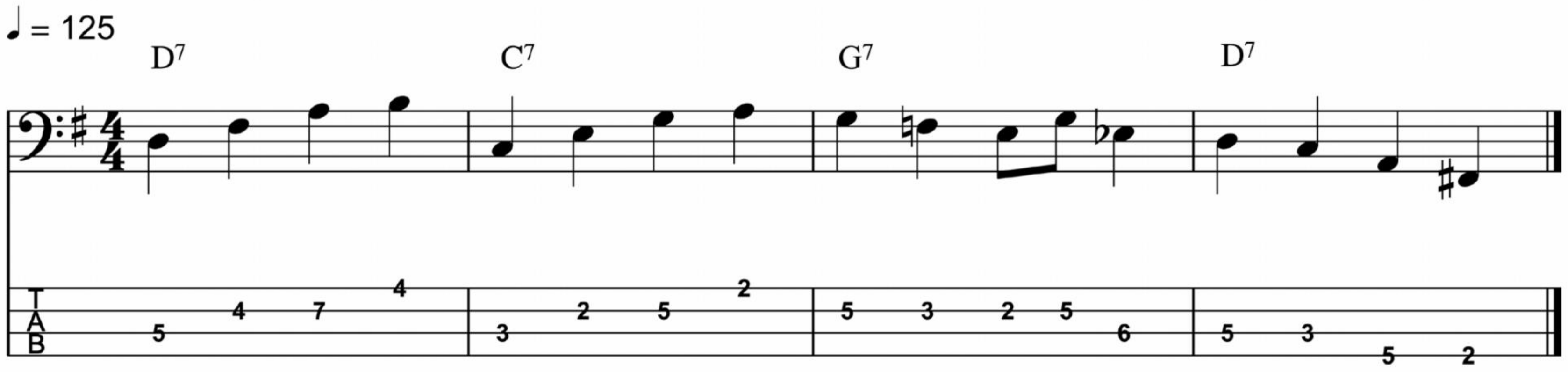


If you ascend through the Mixolydian mode from root to 5th, you'll play five consecutive pitches. However, if you were to utilize the octave and redistribute the root above the 5th, you'll find that only four notes reside between the root and 5th. As a result, when you do this, use a chromatic pitch to even the playing field. Your options are either the major 7th or the ♭6th, but as a major 7th is a leading note which will wish to resolve back to the root, you'll find the ♭6th more favorable.

The ineffably funky Yolanda Charles.

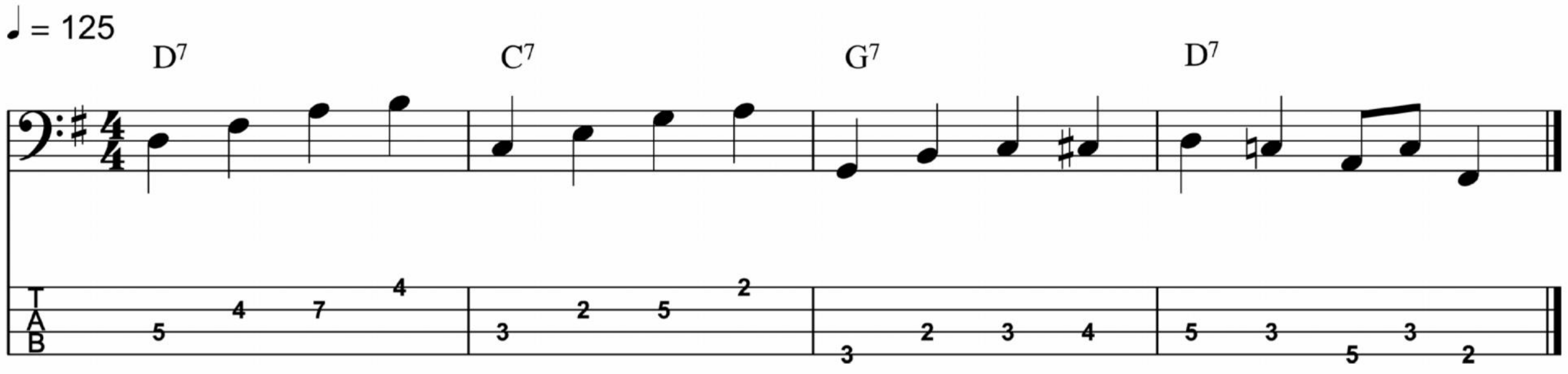
Lorne Thomson/Redferns/Getty

EXERCISE FOUR



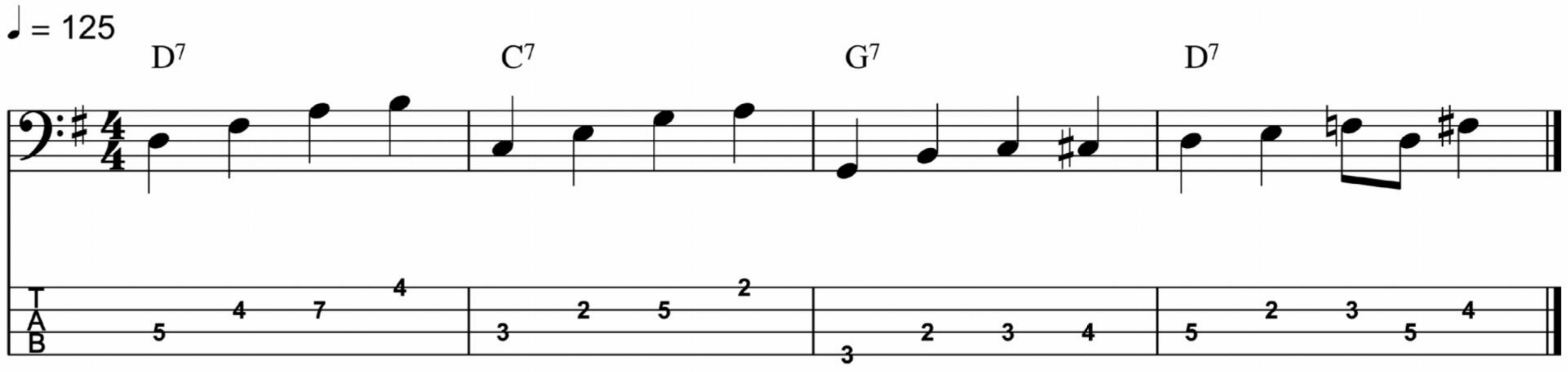
Exercise 4 continues to expand our melodic portrayal of I7–V7. Let's develop the ♭6th motif from the last exercise. Looking at the third beat of measure three, you'll see an additional eighth note. As it's on an adjacent string to the ♭6th it'll allow us to portray it as a rhymical skip, before moving to the final measure, where a Dom 7th arpeggio has been employed. You might have only experienced portraying arpeggios in ascending order, so this additional format might be problematic. Take your time over it.

EXERCISE FIVE



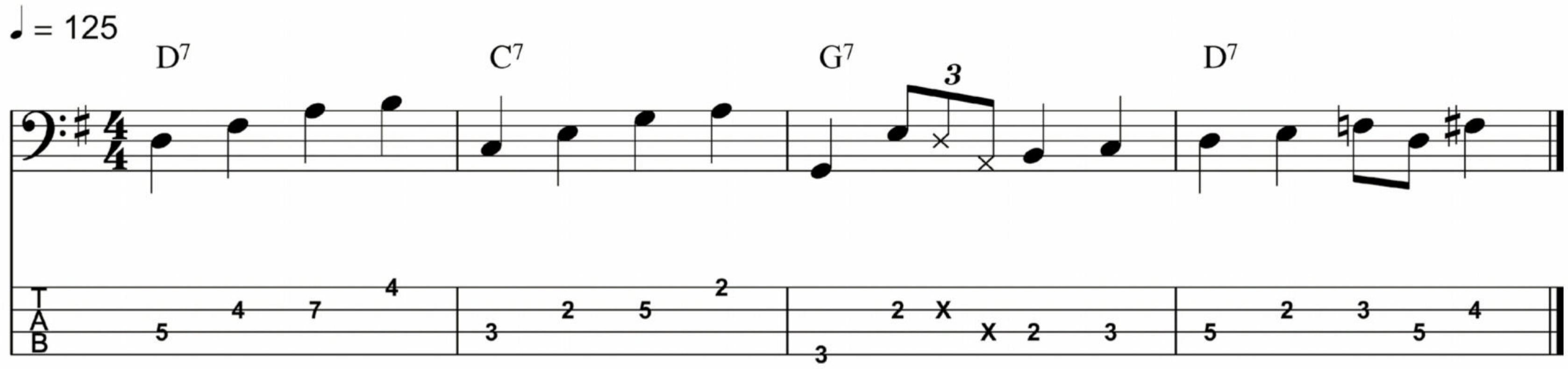
It's possible to omit the use of scales and arpeggios and replace them with chromatic motifs: After all, music is essentially the result of harmonic tension and resolution. This is the principle here, where we play chromatically through adjacent chord types. Place your index finger on B (fret two, string three), and then ascend using one finger per fret until you meet the root note of the D7. Then, descend back to the tonic using a D Dominant arpeggio in first inversion, but remember that you'll be playing the chord tones in reverse order.

EXERCISE SIX



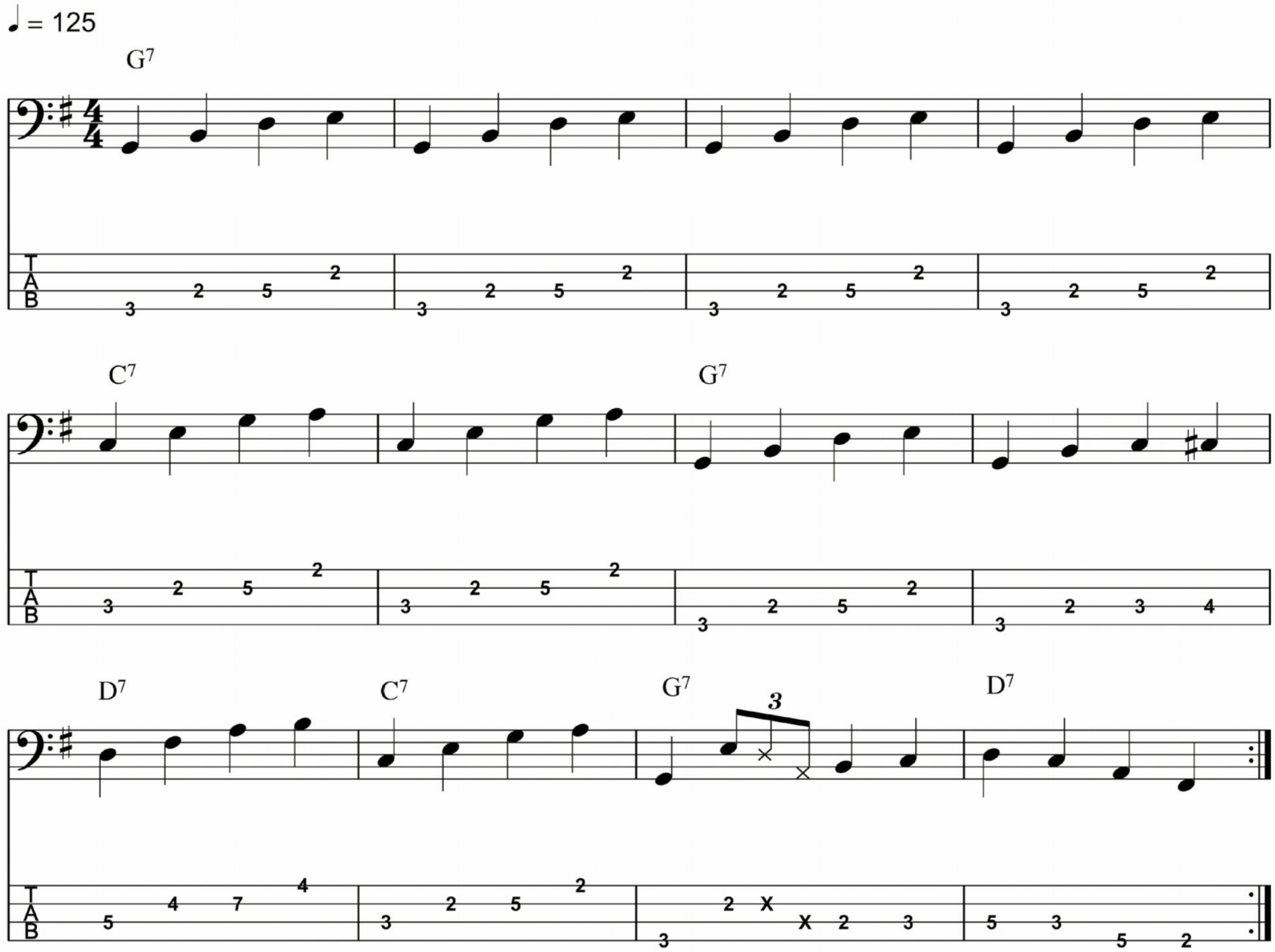
There's nothing wrong with recycling melodic ideas: In fact, most memorable motifs are successful for this reason. Here, we play the previous studies' chromatic motif over a I7 chord. On this occasion, continue the ascent over the V7. Although the phrases feel similar, the diatonic information differs radically, and you'll notice an eighth note skip in the final measure.

EXERCISE SEVEN



Let's look at 8th note triplets. Bar 11 has a small number three above the notes on the second beat. As we saw in Ryan Madora's lesson last month, say the syllables in the word 'tri-pa-let'. We also play some dead notes, or ghost notes, here: These are produced by resting your fretting-hand fingers on the strings and plucking hard. The result is a percussive thud, so don't push too hard on the string, as too much pressure will allow a note to sound.

EXERCISE EIGHT



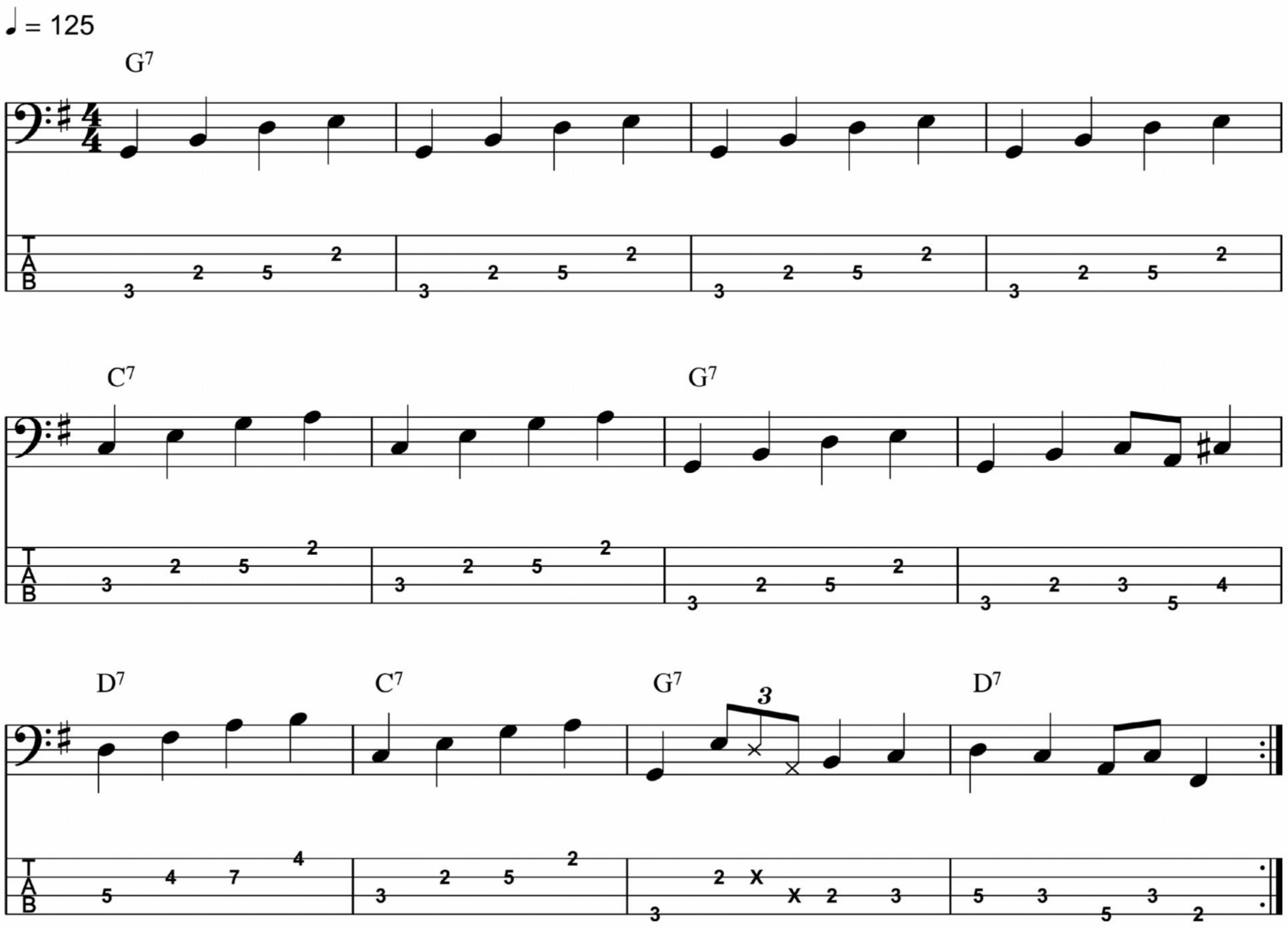
All of this month's studies are designed to further our portrayal of I7-V7 chord progressions. However, let's not forget one important aspect as we progress: We're studying I7-V7 changes, not just turnarounds. As we saw in Exercise 1, the notation will reveal that our targeted sequence also appears as early as bar eight in the progression. Therefore, all of today's concepts can be delivered on two occasions. Exercise 8 redistributes some of our earlier ideas to account for this.

The maestro Abe Laboriel Sr, seated, flanked by his sons Abe Jr and Mateo.

Anthony Pidgeon/Redferns/Getty

Once you've mastered all of this month's studies, try transposing the motifs through all 12 keys, and then compose a few ideas of your own

EXERCISE NINE



All of a sudden, our simple blues progression has started to take on a whole new demeanor. Once you've mastered all of this month's studies, try transposing the motifs through all 12 keys, and then compose a few ideas of your own. Hopefully, as you become more and more familiar with these melodic insights, you'll start to experience some components appearing in your day-to-day playing. Enjoy!

LET'S WORK!

USE MODES TO PLAY CHORDS

Rich Brown guides us to Advanced level every month. Read on as he takes us to the very top of bass technique!

Welcome! In our last lesson, we talked about recognizing our options on a given chord progression using the notes of the triad. We used the II–V–I chord progression to demonstrate this. In this month's lesson, we will expand on that idea in a way that I think you'll definitely find interesting. This expansion all has to do with our trusted friends, the modes.

The point of this lesson is to understand how you can use the modes to play any diatonic chord progression, even an entire song, anywhere that you choose on the fretboard.

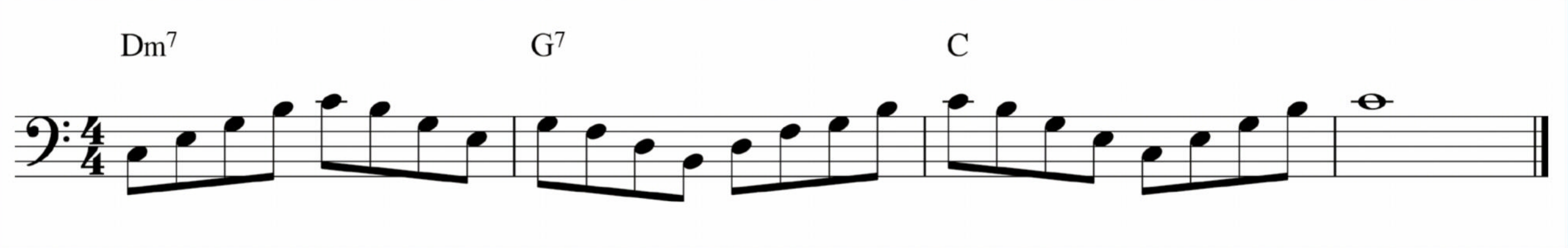
The whole concept is based on a pretty straightforward idea. When you consider the fact that each mode is simply another version of the major scale, it stands to reason that the same triads and chords found within the major scale can all be found within each of its diatonic modes.

Let me show you what I mean.

Victor Wooten a master of theory and technique

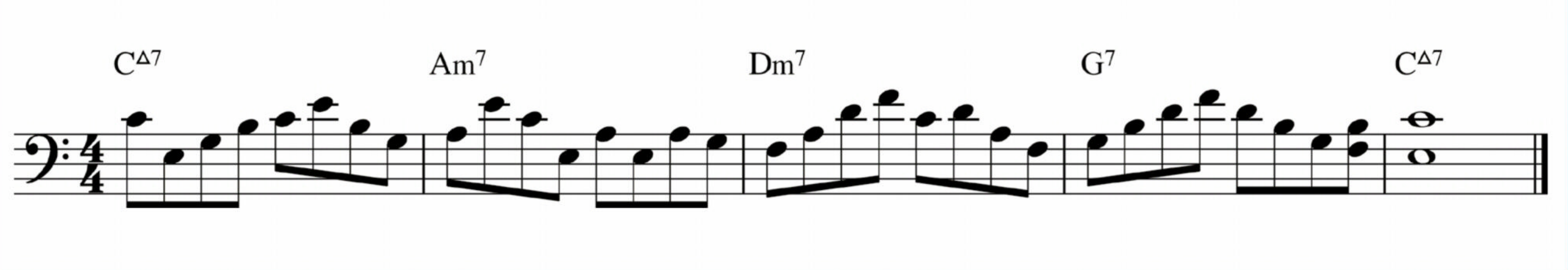
Andrew Lepley/Redferns/Getty

EXERCISE ONE



EXERCISE TWO

EXERCISE THREE



EXERCISE ONE

Exercise 1 is your basic II–V–I in C major. These four bars simply serve to highlight the progression's chord tones (root, third, fifth, and seventh). Note that the chord tones stay within one octave of the scale or mode used. We'll continue to use this one-octave range in all the examples in this lesson.

EXERCISE TWO

For Exercise 2, we use the same idea to find the chord tones of the II–V–I chord progression. But this time, all our chord tones will be found within one octave of the D Dorian scale, which is the second mode of C major. Remember, the Dorian mode is a natural minor scale with a raised 6th, or a minor scale with a major 6th. So let's now take a look at the chord tones of our progression.

II Dmin7	**D F A C**
V G7	**G B D F**
I Cmaj7	**C E G B**

Once we've identified our chord tones, the next step is to locate these notes in our given mode—in this case D Dorian. As you can see, our II chord is obvious. The chord tones here are simply the root, third, fifth, and seventh of D Dorian. Things then get interesting, because when we identify the notes of our V chord within one octave of the D Dorian scale, the familiar fretboard pattern we associate with a dominant 7th chord goes right out the window. The notes G, B, D, and F, are located at the fourth, sixth, root, and third of the Dorian scale. The chord tones of Cmaj7 (C, E, G, and B) are found at the seventh, second, fourth, and sixth of D Dorian.

EXERCISE THREE

Let's switch things up for Exercise 3. The third mode of C major is E Phrygian. This mode is a natural minor scale with a flat two, but for this example, instead of using the II–V–I chord progression, we'll identify the chord tones of a I–VI–II–V chord progression in the key of C, and we'll find all of those notes within one octave of the E Phrygian scale.

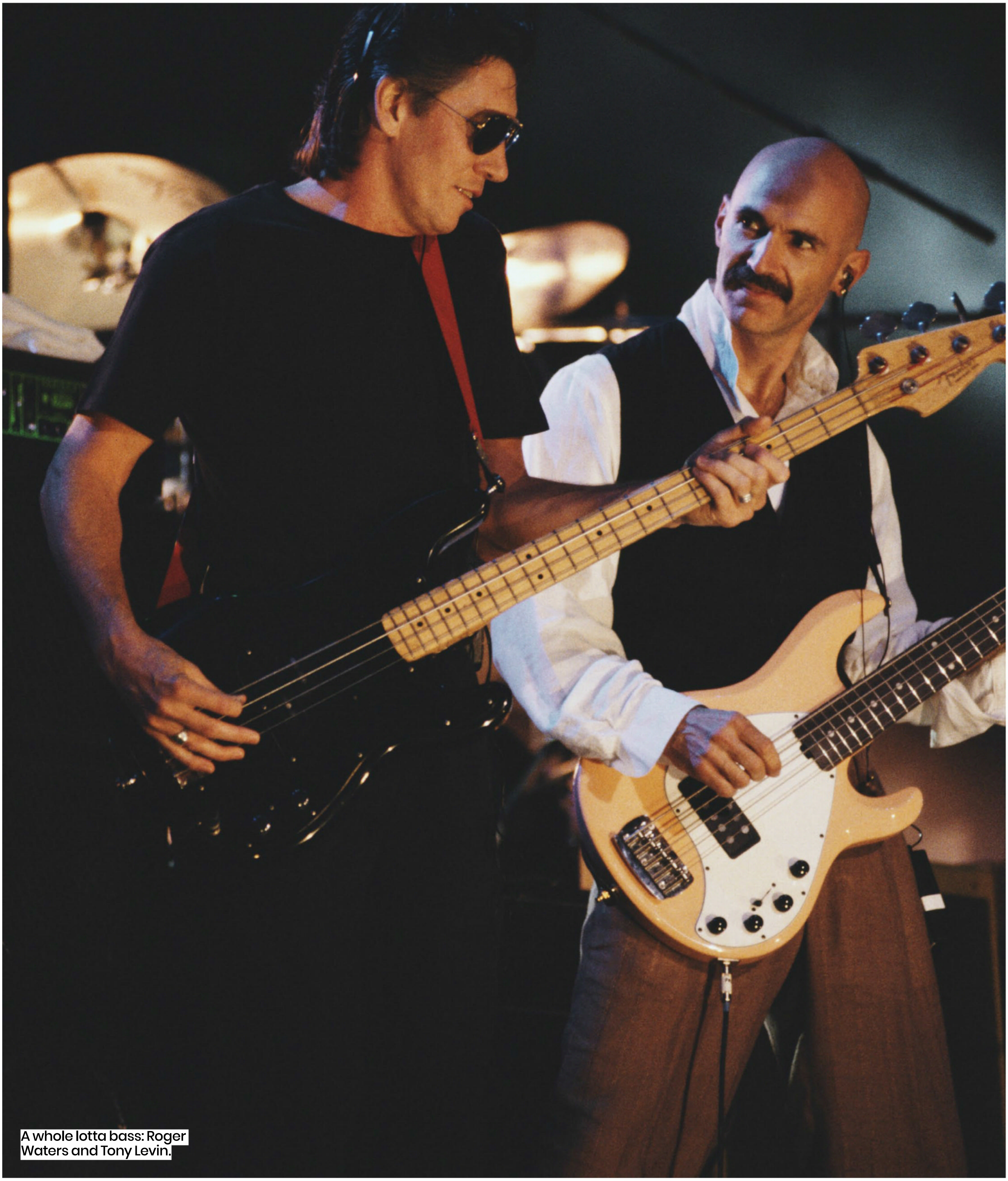
Once again, we'll identify our chord tones and then locate those notes in our chosen mode.

I Cmaj7	**C E G B**
VI Amin7	**A C E G**
II Dmin7	**D F A C**
V G7	**G B D F**

When we examine these notes within our E Phrygian scale, we can see how these notes are laid out inside that scale shape. Let's look at our Cmaj7 chord. The chord tones C, E, G, and B can be found at the sixth, root, third, and fifth degrees of E Phrygian. The chord tones of our Amin7 are located at the fourth, sixth, root, and third. For Dmin7, the notes D F A C are at the seventh, (flat) second, fourth, and sixth degrees, and finally, the chord tones for our G7 are found at the third, fifth, seventh, and (flat) second.

This way of breaking down chord progressions using the modes can be a great revelation for any bass player. I love working on this exercise with my students, because it immediately addresses common issues

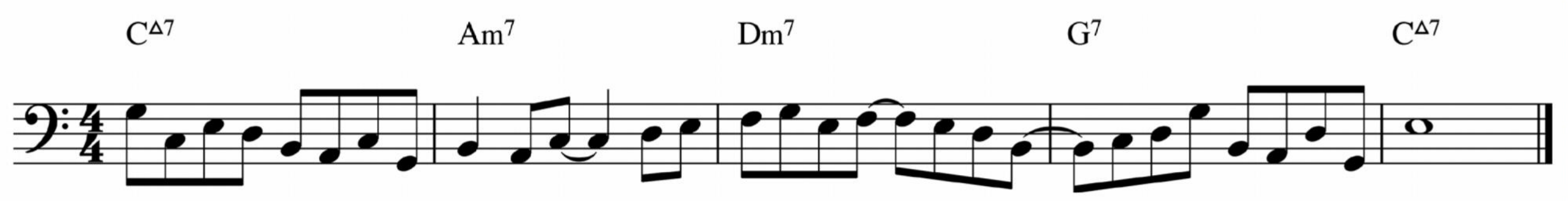
Once we've identified our chord tones, the next step is to locate these notes in our given mode



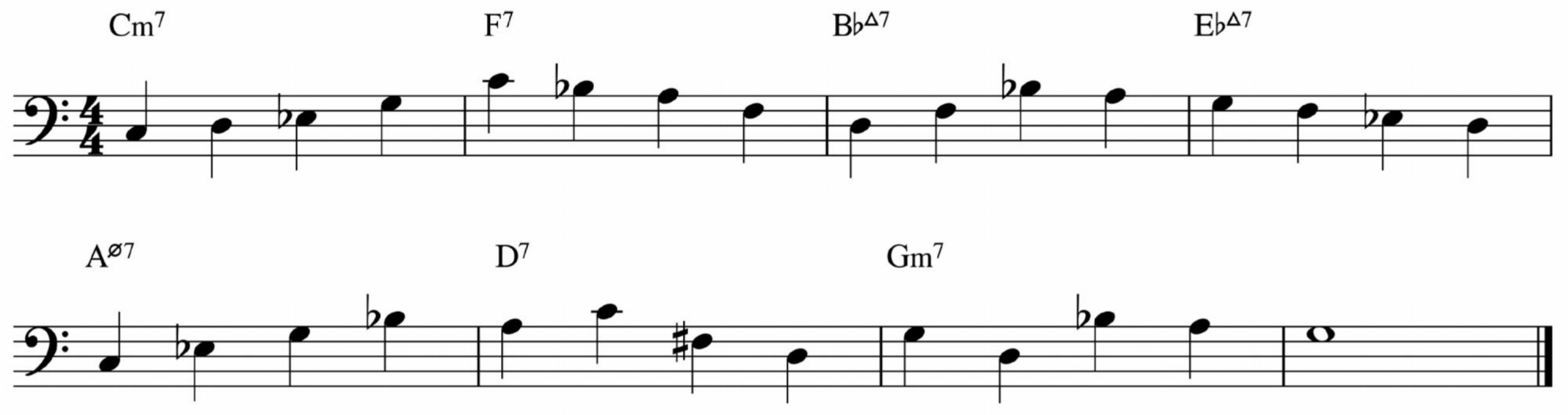
A whole lotta bass: Roger Waters and Tony Levin.

Michael Putland/Getty

EXERCISE FOUR



EXERCISE FIVE



which many bass players experience when playing over changes. For example, some players might find that they are stuck in one position when playing changes, while others feel they have to jump all over the fretboard struggling to play each chord from its root position. This approach to playing over changes using the modes takes care of both issues. You can start with isolating the triads of each chord, then work your way up to using the chord tones, and finally use the full mode to connect the chord tones melodically.

EXERCISE FOUR

Have a look at Exercise 4. In this four-bar phrase, I'm using the G Mixolydian scale to create a melody that connects the chords of a I-VI-II-V chord progression in C major. G Mixolydian is the fifth mode of C major. It is a major scale with a flat (minor) seventh. Once you understand how to use the modes to connect an entire series of chords, there are no limits to what you can play and where you can play it on the fretboard.

EXERCISE FIVE

I'll give you another example. Have a look at the chord progression in Exercise 5. It's an eight-bar progression that may be familiar to you. This set of changes is in the key of G minor, but I've chosen to create a walking bass-line using the mode of C Dorian, and I'll tell you why.

As we've already established, this progression is in the key of G minor. To me, this means that we can use any mode of G minor's relative major key. As the G natural minor scale is the 6th mode of B flat major, this would be our relative major key. From this conclusion, we can use any mode of B flat major to play this progression. I chose the second mode, C Dorian.

There's a lot to wrap your head around here, but I'm sure it won't be too difficult for you to grasp fully. Once you get a deep understanding of this concept, you'll be able to see the entire fretboard in a whole new and exciting light.

Have fun, and make music!

Whatever the mode, remember: This is supposed to be fun.

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MULTI-EFFECTS, PART 1

Let's take a dive into the world of affordable effects pedals. This month: Multi-effects.

Dan Veall is a session and stage bass player, educator and gear expert and is here to answer your questions. Contact: @DanVeallBassist

Since I began this column two years ago, I've often referred to individual effects pedals and their operation, so this month we look at multi-effects units. First, let's focus on the more budget-conscious end of the market.

How *do* we cram a bunch of pedals into a single box?
Well, most single-effect pedals are analog, which a circuit inside that creates the sound you want. Space is often at a premium inside the casing, but if we use digital signal processing (DSP), the circuit simply becomes a platform for running programs that create effects. These include the obvious chorus, reverb and octave, as well as amp-profiling, more complex layered drives, intelligent pitch harmonizing, and even the ability to arrange effects in any order, in series and parallel.

Sounds perfect... for guitar players, anyway. Why do bassists need them?
Well, you don't have to use effects. Most of the time our effects use is rather sparse, but it's nice to have them when you need them, especially if you need to recreate a tone used by a band such as Tool or Muse, for example. Even the godfather of slap, Larry Graham, had a few funky sounds under his fingers.

What else can these things do?
Most come with a method of connecting an external music player and headphones to jam along with songs, a drum machine, looper, and tuner, even on the entry-level offerings. They're also a great aid to practice and silent learning. All the major brands, such as Zoom, Line 6, Boss, Vox, and Mooer, have well-featured units available on the market.

How many bass effects can I run at once?
Well, it depends on the product. Often you can have five or more effects, running simultaneously in any order.

Why take out a bunch of different effects pedals when you can take one?

That's going to sound terrible.
Not if you use them carefully, it won't. Just think it through.

Can't I just use a few individual pedals here and there?
You can, but it's not possible to connect a pedal in between an amplifier and speaker cabinet without some extra kit and expense. In the DSP world, it is possible for free.

Do digital effects sound as good as analog ones, then?
They do nowadays. I've seen countless posts online by people who tried digital effects years ago and wrote them off, saying that they sounded cold or sterile. Back then, they had a point, but I can tell you that modern DSP, even at an entry level, is often better quality than pro-level racks from back in the day. I know, I've owned a few.

Are these things expensive?
For less than $120, you can buy a unit that offers 70 built-in effects, nine classic amp models, a CD-quality looper, a drum machine that syncs with the looper, a tuner, a foot pedal for modulating effects, an external app for creating and managing presets, and an auxiliary input for jamming along to your favorite songs. That's a lot of value. Of course, the prices rise sharply when multi-core processors, touch screens and tour-ready hardware are included.

Whatever. I don't need effects—I just use my fingers.
I applaud anyone who does their own thing, whether that means driving a fat, James Jamerson-style bass tone straight to the desk, or layers of Robert Fripp-inspired soundscapes that don't even sound like a bass guitar. Go forth and experiment!

Thanks for reading! I hope that the column has been helpful. If you have any questions that you'd like me to address on this page, find me on social media.

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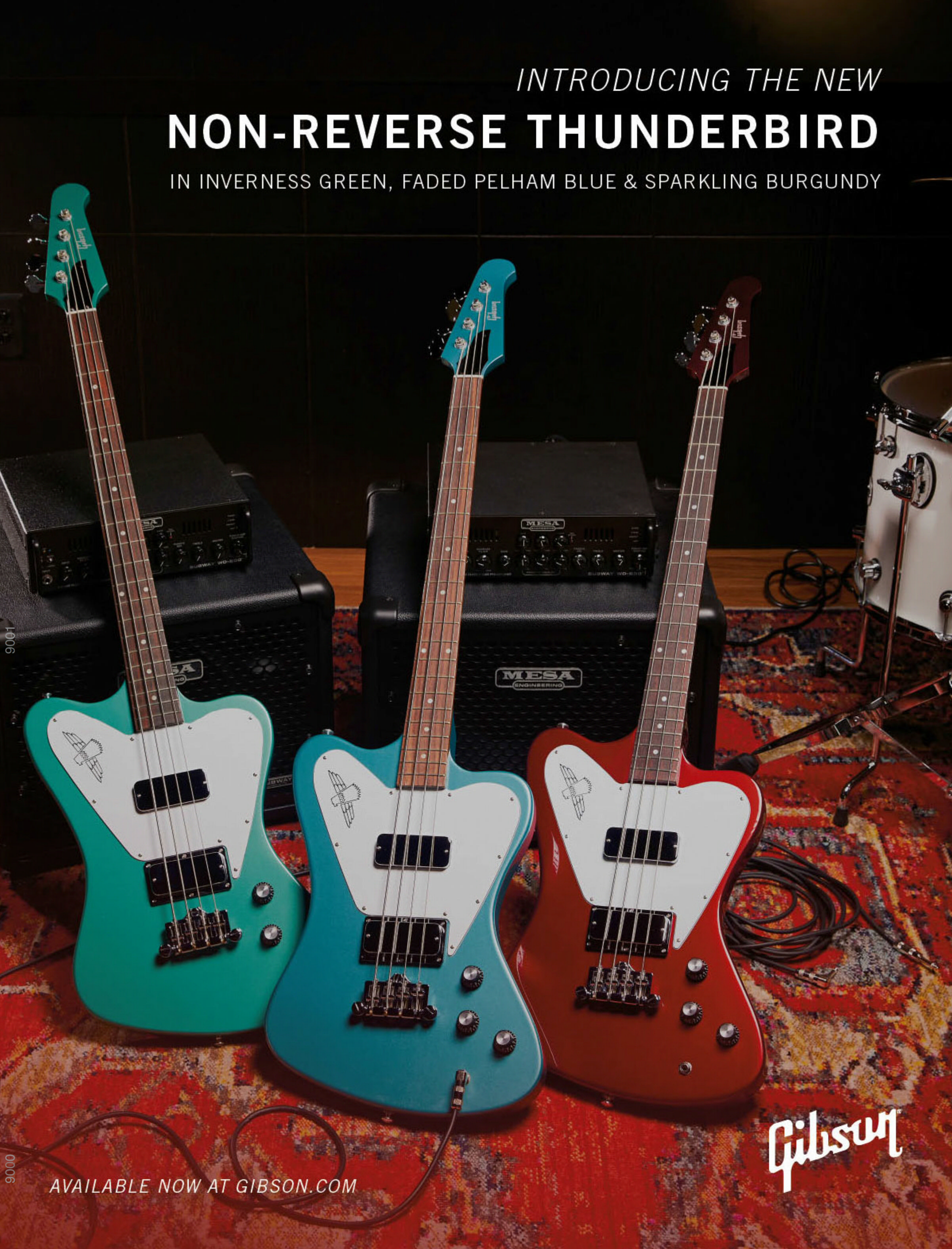
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